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Equitable Curricula and Assessments for Students With Complex Needs: Structures to Support

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Abstract

This organizational improvement plan (OIP) addresses the inequitable assessment measures that are currently used to support students, all with complex needs, within an urban Educational Service District (ESD) in the Western United States. This Problem of Practice (PoP) considers strategies that can be implemented to ensure that students with complex needs are supported with assessments and curricula that are responsive to their unique needs. Grounded in critical theory, with its focus on social justice and the amelioration of marginalizing practices, the PoP is at its core a consideration of the ways in which students with complex needs are marginalized as they are supported using tools designed for neurotypical or less complex students. The problem is considered within an organizational and historical context, with particular attention paid to the neoliberal context that continues to be prevalent in American education. In addition, the problem is situated within the author's particular leadership and theoretical belief systems. Guiding questions focus on the connection between collaborative opportunities for teachers and more responsive student assessments and curricula, the connection between increased teacher and parent input and more responsive student assessments and curricula, and the possibility that increased administrator engagement with classroom work of students would lead to more responsive student assessments and curricula. The gap between current and future state is considered, and the change readiness of the organization is discussed. The framework for leading change is considered through a transformative leadership lens. Possible solutions are discussed, with a recommended solution that includes a multi–loop process incorporating an administrator community of practice, a dialogic community group, and classroom knowledge communities. A multi–step framework for change implementation is selected within the context of a discussion of a range of change implementation frameworks, as well as strategies for monitoring and

adjustment. Finally, next steps and future considerations provide concrete actions moving forward. When implemented, this OIP will provide the systems and structures needed to ensure that students with complex needs are supported with curricula and assessment tools that are responsive to their specific needs, allowing them to demonstrate their strengths in a meaningful way.

Keywords: critical theory, transformative leadership, complex needs, special education, exceptionalities, Individualized Education Program, IEP, Educational Service District, related services, dialogic, neoliberalism, compliance, assessment

Executive Summary

This Organizational Improvement Plan (OIP) represents the culminating research paper for a Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership (EdD), focused on the dissemination of a data–informed plan addressing a Problem of Practice (PoP) within the K–12 educational setting. Situated within a guiding theoretical framework and supported by research, this OIP has as its goal the need to address the inequitable curricula and assessments currently used to support the needs of students served by Individual Educational Programs (IEPs) at an Educational Service District (ESD) in the United States. In my role as a district–level administrator, as well as a program principal, the central question that this OIP is concerned with is: how can the curricula and assessments used to support students with the most complex needs be designed in a responsive and strengths–based way, rather than as symbols of neurotypical hegemony and tools of inequity and marginalization? This question is considered throughout a three–chapter analysis of the problem, possible solutions, and an implementation plan.

Chapter One undertakes a detailed discussion of the problem, situating it within the historical and political context of the organization and considering the larger political contexts that have influenced education in the United States in the past decades. The ESD is in the Western United States, and a discussion of the legal and policy mandates that mandate the scope of the organization are discussed to ensure readers unfamiliar with American educational systems understand the organization in its legal and political context. The contextual understanding of the problem is framed within a critical theory framework and a transformative leadership lens. Guiding questions arising from the PoP are considered. These questions focus on the correlation between teacher input and responsive assessment measures, the possible relationship between teacher and family collaboration and responsive student assessment

measures, and the possible relationship between connecting administrators to students, and more responsive student assessment measures. Chapter One concludes with a discussion of the change readiness of the ESD.

Chapter Two focuses on developing a plan to address the PoP introduced in Chapter One. The leadership stance, informed by the transformative model as embedded within critical theory, is discussed as the means to engage effectively with the needed change. Three organizational change frameworks are considered: Lewin's stage theory of change (1947), Kotter's stage model of organizational change (2012), and Cawsey et al.'s change path model (CPM) (2016). These frameworks are discussed in the context of the critical and transformative lens integrated throughout. To frame what needs to be changed and how that change will occur, an organizational analysis is discussed, using Nadler and Tushman's congruence model (1989) to frame the problem in the context of internal and external factors influencing the organization as it serves students. The gap between current and future state is considered, with needed actions outlined to move toward the future state. Three proposed solutions are discussed, with a recommended solution representing a looped and iterative response to the problem. Chapter Two culminates in a discussion of ethical considerations that may come to bear on the implementation of the OIP.

Chapter Three is primarily concerned with the development of a change implementation plan. A detailed discussion of the looped iterations of the implementation plan are discussed, with the plan embedded in the CPM's stages throughout. Change actions and structures are considered within the context of the transformative leadership model, and connections to this model and the overarching critical theory lens are highlighted. The looped structure is situated within the need to continuously measure progress across the change plan using a multi–modal

approach. A detailed communication plan is outlined, again connecting to the fundamental tenets of transformative leadership, with its emphasis on democratic and inclusive structures. Finally, Chapter Three concludes with next steps and future considerations, as the OIP moves from the page and into practice.

Acknowledgments

As I continue my journey as an educator, there are innumerable individuals who have shown me the way. First and foremost, I thank the students and families whom I have served, first as a teacher and then as an administrator. Students and families have trusted me and shared their hopes and dreams with me, and students showed me what they needed in the most valuable ways possible. For these messages of hope and honesty, I am grateful.

So many fellow teachers and administrators have supported me, answered my questions, and provided me with insight and guidance when I needed it. Thanks to Tommy Epps, my informal mentor and co–teacher when I began in the classroom. Her advice, support, and capable presence was invaluable to my growth as an educator. Thanks also to JoLyn Gibbons, a principal whose early trust in my ability to problem–solve and lead allowed me to imagine what a future as an educator–leader might look like. Similarly, thanks to my current FLS and admin team, all amazing and supportive individuals who show up every day to support and advocate for students. Being part of this team of bright and passionate educators has been such a blessing, and I wouldn't have wanted to support students during a global pandemic with anyone else!

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Acronyms

CCSS (Common Core State Standards)

CPM (Change Path Model)

ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act)

ESD (Educational Service District)

IEP (Individualized Education Program)

IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act)

MTSS (Multi-Tiered Systems of Support)

NCLB (No Child Left Behind)

OIP (Organizational Improvement Plan)

PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports)

PoP (Problem of Practice)

RTI (Response To Intervention)

Definitions

Communities of Practice- an organized group of individuals with a shared domain and practice who gather to create new knowledge in that area (Wenger–Traynor & Wenger–Traynor, 2015).

Critical Theory- an epistemological stance that recognizes the central role of power in creating inequity and is concerned with understanding systems and practices that perpetuate inequities in order to implement reforms that can mitigate those inequities (Shields, 2018).

Dialogic Group- a group of individuals who gather to engage in dialogue that has as its goal an opportunity to give voice to lived experience for all members (Freire et al., 2018).

Transformative Leadership- a leadership stance that is focused on dismantling inequity and marginalizing systems through inclusive and democratic processes that can effect equitable and emancipatory change (Shields, 2018; Shields & Hesbol, 2020).

Chapter One

This Organizational Improvement Plan (OIP) seeks to identify a clear and observable Problem of Practice (PoP) that exists in the organization within which I work, while addressing this problem with an actionable and strategic plan. The plan aims to address the misalignment between the standardized curricula and assessments and curricula used to measure the growth of students with complex needs who are served by Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and design an implementation plan that creates assessments that are responsive to the demonstrated needs of those students. The PoP will be placed within the historical context of both the organization and its readiness for change, as well as the socio–political milieu that influences it. These considerations are contextualized within both the leadership stance and theoretical framework that provide the foundation for my work. Next, the OIP will consider several lines of inquiry that come to bear on the problem. The problem, as well as its and its solutions–focused plan, are anchored within a change framework that considers applicable theories and organizational data. Three possible solutions will be discussed, with the recommended strategy considered in the context of a research–based implementation plan. The implementation plan will consider in detail the strategies and tactics needed to undertake the organizational change required. Key elements considered include communication, monitoring change, course correction strategies, and determining next steps.

Organizational Framework and Context

As a public education organization that serves component school districts within a specific geographical area, an Educational Service District (ESD) is an entity that is both like and unlike a typical school district. As will be discussed in greater detail in this section, ESDs serve students with greater complexity than most school districts, while adhering to the same set of

standards and compliance demands that guide all school districts serving all students. This difference in students served by the ESD drives the gap that the PoP is addressing. Situating the ESD within an historical and socio-political context provides essential information on the nature of the gap that the problem represents. Similarly, understanding the population served by a typical ESD also supports a deeper understanding of the problem, and the need to find equitable solutions that meet the needs of the ESD's students.

The Educational Service District in the Historical Con text

In 2001, the state's legislative body passed Senate Bill 259 (SB 259), legislation that lays out the mandate of Educational Service Districts (ESDs) as entities that provide essential services to students in a way that focuses on equity, excellence, and collaborative work (SB. 259, 2001). This law was the most recent update for ESDs, which have supported their component school districts since 1963 ("The Role of Northwest Regional", 2014). ESDs are regional–level public education agencies that exist across the state, providing a range of supports and services to the component school districts within their respective catchment areas. As an example, in more densely populated urban areas, an ESD will likely serve all the school districts in the county within which it is situated. Due to issues of scale and capacity at the district level, ESDs typically support students with very complex and low–incidence needs, be they behavioural, medical, or communication or sensory–based, that the referring home districts do not have the capacity to serve. Typically, the ESD serves those students with the most complex needs referred to the district by its component districts in self–contained classrooms or separate schools.

Students Served by the Educational Service District

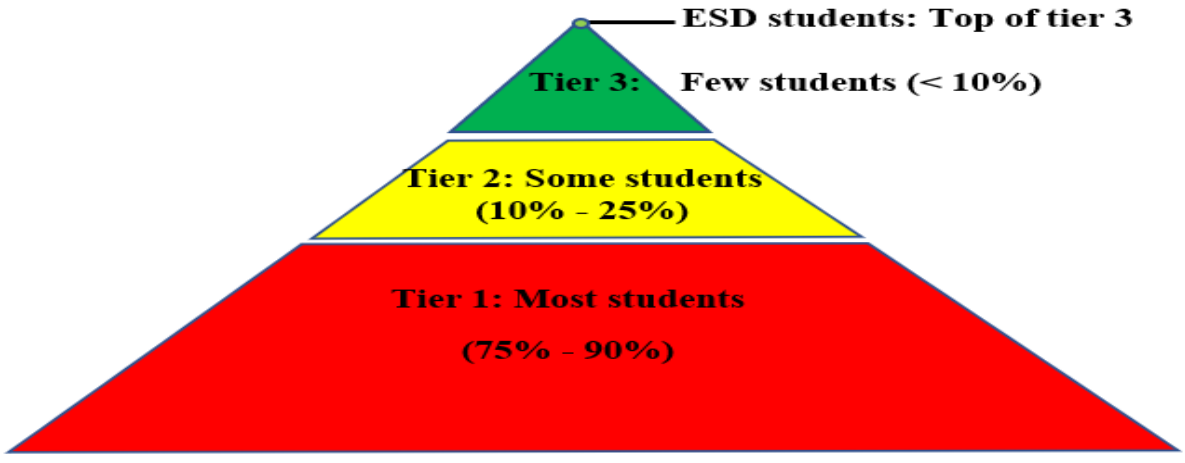
As is the case in every jurisdiction, be it a province or a state, most students are served within their home school districts, also known as school boards in the Canadian context. School

districts design their curricula and structures of support to serve the majority of students within their enrolment area, creating structures such as Response to Intervention (RTI), Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), and Multi–tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) to meet the needs of all students using a tiered response.

However, within the tiered structures of support used at the school district level there are students whose needs and complexity require additional support and resources that may not be available to the home district. These students with the most complex and unique needs are the students who are referred to the ESD for support. As an example, to use a widely understood model of differentiated support, if one considers tier three of an MTSS model as serving the top 5% of students, the ESD would serve a small top portion of tier three for whom tier three supports were not effective. As illustrated in Figure 1, using this model, the population served by the ESD is like a fourth tier at the very top of tier three using this organizing structure ("What is MTSS?", n.d.).

Figure 1

ESD Students Within the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support Model



Note. Adapted from "What is MTSS?," by Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support, (n.d.), (https://www.pbisrewards.com/blog/what-is-mtss/). Copyright 2021 by PBIS Rewards.

The Educational Service District in the Socio–Political Context

Although the ESD serves students with the most complex needs within the public school system, as an entity it operates within the neoliberal landscape that continues to characterize the American public school system (Apple, 2016; Hursh, 2006; Hursh, 2007; Hursh, 2016). With an emphasis on accountability measures and standardized assessments that are produced by private companies, the focus of education continues moving toward privatization and competition, shifting away from an adequately funded system that can responsively meet students' needs (Hursh, 2006). The neoliberal agenda of testing and accountability represents a response to federal legislation such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) ("Making a Difference", 2002) and its successor, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) ("Every Student Succeeds", 2015), both of which sought to improve student achievement for all students. These laws, with their emphasis on accountability and corrective action, are representative of the neoliberal rise of competition and accountability in education, and in turn have contributed to a rise in the use of for–profit curricula focusing on prescriptive measures rather than responsive pedagogical practice. These curricula and assessments are purportedly designed to close the student achievement gaps that NCLB and ESSA identified and attempted to mitigate through legislative action. In actual practice these curricula and assessments are monolithic, encourage teaching to the test, and privilege specific kinds of material that may or may not meet student need (Shields, 2018). Together with the accountability and reporting demands of first NCLB and then ESSA, standardized assessments represent a burden that is more responsive to the private entities creating the assessments than actual student need (Hursh, 2006; Hursh, 2007; Shields, 2018).

The one–size–fits–all nature of the curricula and assessment measures now commonplace in the neoliberal landscape of education serve in practice to meet few individual's needs, except

perhaps those students from the most privileged backgrounds (Shields, 2018). Standardized curricula and assessments work in specific contexts and with specific students. However, as they continue to be used to measure student achievement for diverse student populations, and as a tool for accountability across many contexts, they often serve as tools to marginalize students rather than measure their needs (Hursh, 2006; Hursh, 2007; Shields, 2018).

Of course, if standardized assessments and curricula are not responsive to the needs of most students, then that is doubly true for the students served by the ESD. This is the landscape within which the ESD's programs serve students, and the landscape that creates the inequity and marginalization that is the foundation of the PoP.

The Role of the ESD Board

The ESD is privileged to have a responsive school board that is curious, willing to ask questions, and committed to the agency's mission of equity and collaboration. In the United States, each school district, ESD, or other local public educational entity is governed by a school board which is comprised of a group of elected community members who volunteer to serve the students and families within their community. Ideally, these individuals, as community members, represent the community in all its diversity, and are expected to advocate for equitable outcomes for all students served within the school district. School boards serve as the bridge between local school districts, ESDs and the community, providing guidance, input and approval on staffing, curricula, discipline, budget, among many domains ("Demystifying", 2019). As the elected representatives of the community, school board members are tasked with many things, including ensuring that the district they serve is fiscally responsible, and that all students are receiving an education that supports equitable outcomes.

Existing alongside this reality is the possibility that, as individuals existing within a socio–political landscape that is infused with neoliberal values, board members' commitment to supporting students through accountability measures and data measurement tools situates them as enforcers of Apple's audit culture (Apple, 2016). Although a commitment to equitable student outcomes is a value that all board members hold, that commitment to equity exists within a culture that values data–driven solutions that are largely designed and implemented by for–profit companies and misaligned with the needs of the students that the ESD serves. Despite the complexity of the students that the ESD programs serve, the state and federal requirements to measure student performance using standardized assessments designed for neurotypical or less complex students persist in the ESD setting.

ESD Mission Vision and Values Implementation Process as a Blueprint for OIP Change

The ESD's mission statement explicitly calls for supporting all students in the achievement of excellence ([ESD], 2020). Its vision statement commits to providing all students served with an equitable, individualized and creatively devised program within a safe and supportive setting ([ESD], 2020). Finally, the values that the ESD explicitly commits to centering include equity, families, students, staff, and collaboration ([ESD], 2020).

I highlight the ESD's mission, vision and values and include a discussion of the process by which this document came into being for two reasons. The ESD's mission document clearly illustrates a strand of equity and inclusion within the agency, and the collaborative process that brought it to fruition also serves as a blueprint of sorts for the kind of process that is needed to effectively engage with the PoP outlined within this OIP.

The ESD for which I work has devoted several years to creating structures and processes that have allowed for a collaboratively developed mission, vision and values document that

reflect the stakeholders across the agency and in the community. The culminating mission, vision and values document that was borne of this multi–year collaborative effort articulates the goals commonly valued ([ESD], 2020). Each year of this collaborative process was iterative and cumulative, incorporating feedback and building on the prior work. Progress was monitored using transparent measurement systems, which were published on the agency's website to solicit public input ([ESD], 2020).

This process was structured to ensure that collaborative and inclusive practices were centered, and when the final draft was crafted, the values of staff and student inclusive practice, collaboration, equity, equitable outcomes, and learning were central to the published document ([ESD], 2020). The document itself centers a mission that focuses on the equitable and differentiated delivery of supports to students based on their need, which mirrors the problem being considered. In many ways, the final mission document reflects the iterative and collaborative process by which it was crafted. As mentioned, the process of bringing the document to fruition provides something of a blueprint for the collaborative and iterative work that will be proposed in the OIP's change implementation plan in Chapter Three. The values represented in the mission, vision, and values statement are the core values driving the OIP itself. In engaging with the problem of equitable and responsive student curricula and assessments that is at the core of this OIP, the opportunity to align organization's practice with its stated values is clear and compelling.

Neoliberal Influence on ESD Perspective and Practice

Despite this mission and values focus on equity, inclusion, and collaboration at the larger agency framework level, there are daily practices within the student services department that do not align with that framework and are instead more closely aligned to the neoliberal values

prevalent within the American landscape of public education. These disconnected values include a strong emphasis within the organization on compliance, but focus on compliance that does not accurately or adequately respond to the most urgent student need (Hursh, 2006).

The pressure to comply and measure data is present within the ESD and is found both within the annual state assessments that ESD programs administer, as well as the standards–based curricula and assessments used to demonstrate growth and program efficacy to our board and our community. Each year, the agency assembles, presents to the board, and publishes a report card for each program. These report cards include a description of the program, the program's student demographics, and academic growth data for students within the program ([ESD], 2019). The program report cards measure student growth using assessment measurements that are designed to measure the growth and needs of neurotypical students, or students whose needs are considerably less complex than students in ESD programs. These measures do not adequately represent the student population served by ESD programs, which serve students who experience complex behavioural, medical, sensory or communication needs, have experienced a high level of trauma, or are neurodiverse. Although these data often do not align with a specific population of student's strengths and needs, they do meet the need for data that is measurable and easily understood by the ESD's school board, and the public that the school board represents. These data, tied as they are to state and federal funds, meet the most immediate need to continue serving students, but they do not truly measure the growth of the students served in our programs. This is because in assessing students using standardized measures designed for neurotypical or less complex students, they are measuring the wrong things, and not capturing the strengths, needs, and growth of the ESD's students.

The disconnect between standardized data assessment tools and complex student populations that demand assessment tools reflecting their specific and complex needs reflects an engagement in what Bal and Dóci (2018) term fantasmic logic. In this dynamic, individuals uphold a dysfunctional system, despite being presented with clear evidence that the system contradicts their values, as outlined in the organization's mission, vision and values statement (Bal and Dóci, 2018). If the daily practice of the ESD's special education department moves toward a focus on the kind of data that captures student need and measures genuine student growth, there will be a clear connection between a daily practice that is responsive to student need and equitable outcomes, and the agency's mission, vision and values of equity and inclusion.

There is a false conflation between student achievement and the measurement and assessment tools that are the instruments of a neoliberal culture that reproduce inequality rather than promote equity (Apple, 2017; Bal & Dóci, 2018; Hursh, 2006). Capacity building and collaborative work within the ESD organization itself is how true reform and concrete change will allow the values identified by the agency to come to fruition in daily practice (Heydebrand, 1977).

Leadership Position and Theoretical Lens

The PoP that this organizational plan is concerned with is positioned within transformative leadership frame, which in turn is situated within critical theory. The values of transformative leadership and critical theory are aligned in a way that synergistically meet the needs of the problem of inequitable student assessments. Conceptually, these belief systems are driven by a focus on dismantling systems of inequity and questioning the beliefs that inform those systems. Practically, critical theory and transformative leadership are both informed by a

commitment to collaboratively build democratic and equitable systems that support all community members (Furman, 2004; Giroux, 2011; Shields, 2018).

Working Within the Frame of Critical Theory

The fundamental need to articulate the underpinnings of inequity that guide this work positions my theoretical lens within the critical theory space. Within the educational space, critical theory is concerned with understanding systems and practices that perpetuate inequities in order to implement reforms that can mitigate those inequities (Shields, 2018). In this time of neoliberal hegemony, where values of the market infuse all aspects of the commons and equity gaps continue to widen, adopting a critical stance to understand and address these gaps is essential (Giroux, 2011). Leadership in this context demands that student equity is centered, and actively engaged with by staff with the goal of dismantling it in actionable ways.

The mismatch between the audit culture's values of standardized assessment (Apple, 2017) and the complex and diverse needs of exceptional students illuminates a dynamic in which important voices are not heard, and student need is not seen. Shields (2018) states that there is a herculean effort needed for those minoritized students to succeed within the context of curricula and assessments that are designed to serve the majority. The students with complex needs served within the ESD's programs, in being held to accountability standards embedded assessments designed by private companies for less complex or neurotypical students, are faced with a kind of erasure or absence (Apple, 2017). Their experience and needs are not considered valuable enough to use as the templates for assessment or curricular design, with the result that they are assessed using standardized tools that neither meet their needs, capture their strengths, nor prepare them for a future within a community that purports to represent all citizens (Apple, 2016; Apple, 2017; Shields, 2018). The knowledge that they need to learn, and the information that

they need to be taught, is not valued enough to be reflected in responsive assessments or curricula (Apple, 2016; Apple, 2017). As Apple (2016) states, the neoliberal project has co–opted the conversation on educating students, and the idea of what constitutes a "good school, good knowledge, good teaching, a good student, and good learning are being radically transformed" (p. 507). Within this landscape, characterized as it is by monetization and capital above all else (Apple, 2016; Hursh, 2016), there is little space for students and their unique needs.

The absence of heard voices and systematic marginalization of disenfranchised individuals and groups situates this work within the frame of critical theory, with its focus on the need to advocate for those who are disenfranchised and less powerful (Scotland, 2012; Shields, 2018). In this work, it is essential to both acknowledge the power hierarchies located in multiple spaces while designing structures to disrupt and dismantle them. Structures of power are often invisible to the majority, particularly those majorities who benefit from them, existing without thought or intention whilst perpetuating inequities and preserving the status quo. For a leader committed to disrupting these systems, it is essential to demonstrate a transparent, collaborative stance that dismantles hierarchical and power dynamics that create barriers between roles.

My Agency to Effect Change

My position as a district–level administrator who also serves as a principal supporting a program full of classrooms allows me to move between spaces. I move between executive–level district administrative spaces and classrooms where staff are directly engaged in the work of supporting students, toggling back and forth between multiple hierarchical levels of the department. As a supervisor/principal, I support an ESD program that serves students with complex needs. I also supervise related service providers (RSPs) across multiple ESD programs.

These different roles allow me to collaborate with multiple stakeholders, including teachers, paraprofessionals, RSPs, principals, parents, students, and other district–level administrators within the department, giving me a unique opportunity to co–create conditions for change that support equitable student outcomes.

My position as a leader occupying multiple spaces allows me to provide the resources and opportunities for classroom staff to dialogue on what assessment and curricular support for students with complex needs might look like while relaying those conversations and ideas to executive–level administrators from whom data–monitoring requests originate. In my role as principal, I field district–wide policy decisions and requests from executive–level administrators around student monitoring data, which as discussed use assessment tools designed to measure the progress and needs of neurotypical or less complex students. As principal, I gather the requested data for the classrooms and students that I support as well as disseminate these requests for monitoring data to the classroom staff. In gathering data as well as requesting of teachers that it be gathered, I am directly aware of the marginalization that misaligned assessment tools perpetuate for students with complex needs in the classrooms, and the degree to which those requests do not align with the strengths and needs of the students that I serve (Hursh, 2006; Hursh, 2007; Shields, 2018). Designed by neoliberal systems to shift responsibility for student success away from the government agencies that underfund schools and onto individual schools, students, and teachers (Hursh, 2007), standardized assessments fail most students, and are particularly egregious in the ways that they fail to respond to the needs of the students who require the most support (Shields, 2018).

Situating Transformative Leadership Within Critical Theory

Freire et al. (2018) put forward the notion that to move toward more equitable outcomes and a more just society, there needs to be a deep investigation and understanding of the inequities themselves. On a certain level, engaging in the work of this OIP has invited a deep consideration of the inequitable structures that have come to bear on students who experience disability.

It is essential to also draw from multiple disciplines to fully understand the problem of inequitable outcomes, as well as possible solutions. Despite the complexity of the work regarding equitable outcomes for students, and the many cross–disciplinary frameworks and concepts that can contribute to a greater understanding of both the problem and potential solutions, it is possible to work within the critical theory space without moving into a conceptual frame (Green, 2014; Casanave & Li, 2015). Positioning this work within critical theory is sustainable perhaps because critical theory is an expansive and unifying space that allows for many concepts and disciplines to reside within.

As a leader, my commitment to a critical stance necessitates that the work be actively engaged with in an inclusive way with staff across roles, and stakeholders beyond the agency. A leader's role is to listen to the voices that advocate for students, and leverage this into supporting students. The experience and needs of marginalized and disenfranchised populations must be centered, and systems put into place to ensure that there are opportunities for often marginalized voices to be heard (Furman, 2004; Shields, 2018). This is of utmost importance as a strategy to disrupt the values of a society that implicitly, and explicitly in policy and law, make clear that individuals are incrementally valued only to the degree to which they create capital (Hursh, 2006).

Taylor (1991) suggests that creating a collective understanding around an urgent issue in need of change can seed the conditions needed for that change. The values and actions of self–reflection, ethical awareness, and commitment that Taylor and others center in the authentic leadership model (Duignan, 2014; Northouse, 2019; Taylor, 1991) resonate for me as a leader. However, Shields (2018) extends these values within the transformative leadership frame to move toward a powerful stance that addresses inequity and marginalization in a way that most closely aligns with my beliefs and values. As will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two, Shields and Hesbol (2020) outline eight tenets that are foundational to transformative leadership. Transformative leadership focuses on questioning knowledge frameworks that support inequity and dismantling large-scale systems of inequity that affect individuals on a human scale, weaving together public and private good (Shields & Hesbol, 2020). With this focus, and its focus on collaboratively and courageously building equitable systems for all, transformative leadership is a stance that aligns with my values, and the needs of the PoP itself (Shields & Hesbol, 2020). I believe that the transformative stance, rooted in relationship and collaboratively co–creating conditions for change, is how genuine reform and progress can be implemented as I engage in the issues central to this PoP.

Because the PoP with which I am engaged exists in part due to interactions between complex and discrete structures, effective change frameworks must allow for complex and inter–disciplinary structures while also supporting collective and collaborative processes. When considering how to implement effective change, it is important for collaborative structures and processes to be designed and planned for at the outset (Bryson et al., 2015). Ryan and Rottmann (2007) suggest that there is a fundamental need to include multiple and diverse voices in engaging with the work of dismantling inequitable systems, and this inclusive mandate is aligned

with the use of a collaborative, collective model rooted in critical theory principles. Centering this in my leadership practice means providing concrete opportunities for staff collaboration across roles, with an explicit commitment to examining the systems that perpetuate inequitable outcomes for students. The centering of students and the systems of inequity must be connected to a prioritization of actionable ways that groups can disrupt these systems in support of equity and inclusion.

Collaborative and collective action strategically surfaces and disrupts what Ryan and Rottmann (2007) characterize as hidden, normalized inequity, and is squarely within the realm of critical theory. In this space of collective, collaborative action, there is a bridge that allows the work to move beyond the hegemony of neoliberalism into the realm of critical theory and social justice.

The values and structures embedded within the critical theory framework—of collaborative effort focused on creating equitable systems to alleviate marginalization— align with the work necessary to dismantle the inequities central to the PoP. The values and processes inherent to critical theory—reflection, collaboration, transparency, inclusion, and a commitment to hearing all voices and working to dismantle systems of oppression—mirror the collective structures that worked together to articulate the ESD's mission. Utilizing the values and processes of critical theory opens up the possibility of alignment between the ESD's mission, and the promise of serving students equitably.

Leadership Problem of Practice

An emerging challenge in the student services department of my ESD in an urban American setting is a lack of focused attention on ensuring that the students that the agency serves, almost all students with complex needs served by IEPs, are supported in responsive ways

that ensure equitable and inclusive student outcomes. In an era in which neoliberal values are dominant across all sectors of American life (Hursh, 2006), the ESD's teachers and administrators spend a great deal of effort and energy on meeting benchmarks on assessments and ensuring compliance and accountability to national standards of student achievement ("Applications," n.d.). All Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are designed for neurotypical students and implemented at the federal level, with students with complex needs expected to meet these benchmarks, or benchmarks scaffolded from them. Special education teachers are expected to design instruction around these standards, and private companies, responding to the needs of the market, create curricula and assessments designed to meet the needs of the less complex student populations more typically served (Hursh, 2016; Shields, 2018). This neurotypical (and market–oriented) bias does not address the unique and complex needs of the students that we serve ("The Challenges", 2017), creating an environment where the assessment tools used to measure growth for students with complex needs are designed by private companies for less complex, and sometimes neurotypical, students.

The Gap

As Hursh (2006) highlights, compliance guidance, issued by centralized entities such as state and federal governments and delivered by private companies in the form of standardized curricula and assessments, attempts to serve all students equitably. However, in attempting to serve all students equitably, these compliance demands fail many, particularly students of color and students with complex needs (Shields, 2018). This compliance culture is designed to measure the growth of neurotypical students, with marginalized students falling further behind in the achievement gap. As that gap widens, the burden and blame for that gap is placed on the

individual student, teacher, or administrator rather than the system that refuses to recognize the inequity built into itself while continuing to demand compliance (Hursh, 2006).

Hallinger and Heck (2010) highlight the clear and mutually reinforcing connection between a collaborative leadership stance that includes teachers in decision–making, increased staff capacity, and improved student outcomes. However, an educational culture steeped in neoliberal values uses strategies that do not serve students who require significant and differentiated support. Education in the neoliberal landscape is characterized by top–down and externally imposed mandates for compliance. This dynamic works against allowing those closest to the work to have a voice in the assessment measures used for students who require significant support. These compliance strategies create educational systems that are presented as being the means by which inequities are alleviated, but they do not meet student need, and deepen inequities (Apple, 2017; Hursh, 2006). Set within an audit culture of regular compliance checks and data reporting (Apple, 2017), teachers and principals scramble to meet benchmarks and teach to misaligned and inappropriate standards, losing opportunities to support students in responsive ways that meet their needs and improve their outcomes. Time spent on complying with mandated assessments is time that is unavailable to implement instruction and assessments that are responsive to the unique and complex needs of students. As the ESD's students move between a range of programs that are de–centralized both geographically and programmatically, there are few intentional opportunities for capacity–building or collaboration for staff across programs, and few structured and sustained opportunities for cross–disciplinary and intra–departmental collaboration to build capacity in support of equitable outcomes for students with complex needs.

Students who are served by IEPs must be equitably served in ways that align with the federal law in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). IDEA is the 1990 law that governs special education in the United States (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 1990). Within that goal of equity, it is important to understand that definitions of success and examples of student proficiency are unique to each student with complex needs. When students are held to standards developed for neurotypical students, their unique experiences and needs are made invisible. Centering neurotypical measures of success erases the needs of students with complex needs, perpetuating their marginalization within a larger neoliberal landscape that values productivity, consumption, and competition (Apple, 2016; Hursh, 2006; Hursh, 2007; Hursh, 2016).

Equitable support for students in a collaborative department will be characterized by a commitment to assessing how students with complex needs can have their needs assessed, and their growth measured, using curricula and assessments that are responsive to their unique needs. In this way, the strengths of students will be seen, their needs met responsively, and their lived realities will be honoured.

Problem of Practice

As both a district level administrator and a principal of a program within the student services department of the ESD, I am committed to ensuring that student needs are supported in equitable, responsive, and inclusive ways. The PoP being considered is the misalignment between standardized curricula and assessments used to measure student growth and the demonstrated needs of the students with complex needs that the ESD serves. This misalignment marginalizes student strengths and needs while also erasing and ignoring the fundamental realities that students with complex needs experience.

Framing the Problem of Practice

As educators work to meet the needs of students, they do so within an environment that is beset by market-oriented concerns that often take precedence over student need (Shields, 2018; Hursh, 2006). In this new landscape, neoliberal values of the market eclipse the real needs of all students, with the needs of complex students being most ignored (Shields, 2018; Hursh, 2006).

Over the last two decades, the American public education system has been subject to the values of what Apple (2017) terms the audit culture, a central hallmark of which is a privileging of and focus on compliance and student assessment. Often, these compliance and data–focused policies measure data points that do not capture information needed to support equitable and successful student outcomes, particularly for students with complex needs. This misalignment occurs due to the neurotypical bias of the curricula and assessments used to measure growth. The pressure to align with inappropriate assessment tools is often tied to a need to demonstrate results in order to secure funding or accreditation. In addition, these misaligned assessment tools are often generated and supported by private companies offering a wide range of services such as accreditation, textbook, and examination software. These private sector services are all identifying characteristics of the neoliberal landscape within which contemporary American schools exist (Hursh, 2006). The language of the companies providing these services focus on values that promote achievement, equity, and positive student outcomes for all students, regardless of "disability, language, or sub–group status" (Gendron, n.d., p. 1). In using this language, corporate providers of student assessment tools use the neoliberal strategy of co–opting the values of the commons—inclusivity and equitable opportunities for all—into a private, for–profit model that is structured to create systems of compliance and accountability that align with the interests of the market (Apple, 2016; Hursh, 2007; Hursh, 2016). In this way,

the appearance of a common mission is constructed between the professed values of corporate providers of assessments, which are guided by profit, and public education entities, which are guided by a moral imperative to serve all students within the community. This false connection provides schools with a permission structure to use corporate assessment tools. However, by using these tools, schools, and the educators within them must navigate the conflict between serving their communities responsively and collaboratively while implementing centrally mandated instruments of accountability and measurement.

Apple (2016) highlights the importance of engaging with the idea of the crisis of disenfranchisement in education, with a view toward not buying into neoliberal ideas of reform in response to the crisis in education. Rather, Apple (2016) centers advocacy for marginalized populations, and a thoughtful and critical consideration of the absent voices:

> Nearly everyone agrees that something must be done to make it more responsive and more effective. Of course, a key set of questions is: Responsive to what and to whom? Effective at what? And whose voices will be heard in asking and answering these questions? These are among the most crucial questions one can ask about education today. But let us again be honest. The educational crisis is real, especially for the poor and oppressed. Dominant groups have used such 'crisis talk' to shift the discussion onto their own terrain. (p. 507)

The brilliance of neoliberal values is the success by which they have obscured inequity by co–opting the language that describes inequity. In this way, marginalized populations are rendered invisible, and the burden of their marginalization is shifted onto them.

When students with complex needs are served within settings that use standardized assessments and curricula that neither reflect their strengths and needs nor measure their growth,

there are impacts on their experiences, in school and beyond. As Jao and McDougall (2016) state, teachers are creative and passionate as they navigate their own learning and capacity building. The vast majority of teachers are in education because of their desire to support genuine student growth. However, in many systems that use centrally mandated standardized assessment tools for students with complex needs, a gap between what teachers have to teach and what students need to learn exists (Shields, 2018).

When teachers engage with misaligned assessments and curricula, the time and resources that they spend on training, instruction, and assessment is time and resources not available to see, measure, and meet actual student need. For students, the act of having to engage with misaligned tools erases their lived realities, denies them their voice, and robs them of the opportunity to be wholly positioned within a strength–based space. On a practical level, time spent engaging with these misaligned tools is time not available to have their strengths and needs seen and supported responsively and appropriately, all things that will allow students to grow, succeed, and move toward autonomy and success as defined by their unique strengths, needs, and lived experience.

Guiding Questions Emerging From the Leadership Problem of Practice

With their focus on visibility, voice and collaboration, the guiding questions that follow function as antidotes to the erasure and invisibility that result from centrally mandated standardized assessments. In that guiding spirit, I believe that several factors are key influencers of the problem. There is little time for focused collaboration with the staff close to the work, few opportunities for community and family members to engage deeply with issues of responsive assessments for students with complex needs, and a disproportionate amount of time and resources spent on complying with the mandated assessment and measurement measures that are

of limited use for students. These are the factors that will provide the blueprint for the following prioritized lines of inquiry.

Guiding Question One: **Collaborative Opportunities for Teachers and Responsive Assessments and Curricula**

If opportunities for collaborative practice focused on supporting equitable student outcomes are created across the ESD's student services department, will there be a positive effect on equitable student outcomes? How strong is the connection between targeted and intentional collaborative practice and improved student outcomes?

In the best of times, structured opportunities for collaboration are a challenge within the organizational structure of the ESD, with a great deal of staff time and resources spent on engaging with compliance issues that do not support improved outcomes for students with complex needs. Hallinger and Heck (2010), in work that considers multiple models of collaborative practice and the degree to which they are positively correlated with student growth, suggest that the reciprocal effects model is the most effective. The reciprocal effects model considers multiple factors that influence student outcomes, including leadership, a school's culture, teacher capacity, and student achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 2010). This model finds that these multiple factors are mutually influencing in an iterative way which over time is substantially beneficial to both staff capacity and student outcomes (Hallinger & Heck, 2010). Using the tenets of the transformative model as a guide, a focused emphasis on both including disenfranchised voices and critically questioning whose needs are prioritized around data measurement and pedagogical choices could seed the reciprocal effects model with a culture that works toward student equity in actionable ways.

Edwards (2011) identifies the transformative nature of meaning–making in cross– or inter–disciplinary boundary zones. A focused engagement with the central issue of student equity within these boundary zones allows a rich range of perspectives to be included, fostering creative solutions to entrenched practices that perpetuate inequity. The idea of looking beyond the organization to engage community and school district stakeholders in considering how to build support for equitable and inclusive outcomes is also a potential opportunity to build capacity within the home school districts of the students that the ESD serves. This larger–scope engagement would move the work to a place of deeper democracy, with outcomes that could create more equitable and responsive systems for students within the context of the community (Furman, 2004; Furman & Starratt, 2002; Shields, 2018).

An important barrier to focused collaboration is the wide range of school cultures and values that exist between staff and programs, and the effect that these cultural and power differences can have on effective and focused collaboration (Hong & Fiona, 2009). Positioned within the prioritized frame of equitable and inclusive student outcomes, collaborative and inclusive structures and practices may be a strategy through which common values around equity can be identified and refined, and power differences mitigated.

Guiding Question Two: Teacher and Family Collaborative Input and More Responsive Assessments and Curricula

If we give teachers and families intentional opportunities to collaborate with the goal of providing more input on how to measure student growth and build capacity, will that lead to more equitable outcomes? What would happen if we asked families and teachers to tell us about the strengths and needs of their students? What is the information that families and teachers

have, that we haven't asked to hear? Can that information lead to more responsive student assessments?

COVID–19 and the school closures that began in March 2020 changed everything for the programs supported by the ESD student services department. Everything is now in a new world, but some realities have not changed. COVID–19 has highlighted the degree to which students with complex needs experience inequitable outcomes, particularly as they are served within systems that are built to serve neurotypical students (Frick et al., 2012). There is little doubt that the COVID–19 reality has renewed the urgency to create structures that support teacher capacity in support of student equity.

Spillane and Shirrell (2018) identify close physical proximity as being strongly correlated with collaborative teacher interactions, but our collective understanding of what that means in the COVID landscape has shifted. It is now essential that educators create opportunities for collaboration across physical space. In addition, the closures have taught us that there is great benefit in having increased opportunities for family and student input in non–educational settings. Windows into student and family realities have provided a great opportunity for school staff to respond to student need in a functional, holistic way. This socially distanced reality has taught us that teachers, staff, and families can collaborate in the virtual space, and creatively seek input across settings and roles benefits families and students. In this moment of demand for creative thinking and flexibility, we must also realize that capacity–building for educators can extend well beyond formal professional development opportunities. Shirrell et al. (2019) have found that informal teacher–mentor interactions can be more effective in building teacher capacity than more traditional professional development opportunities, perhaps due to the more sustained nature of these kinds of interactions. These informal interactions should be considered

as structures that could effectively supplement more formal professional development trainings in capacity–building. When peer collaborative practice, informal or formal, is explicitly centered around exploring strategies to support equitable and inclusive outcomes for students, these interactions will have greater impact in capacity building toward that goal amongst staff.

Stein and Coburn (2008) suggest that structured but informal interactions between teachers allows for meaning–making and is a successful strategy that can both support capacity–building for teacher practice as well as the implementation of district–initiated reforms. Jao and McDougall (2016) suggest that effective collaborative opportunities between teachers can succeed across both time and physical space. The experience of the past year has given us a powerful reminder that collaborative opportunities can include family and community members. The authors identify several factors connected to successful peer collaboration, including structured opportunities for peer interaction, principal support for planning time, and guided structural supports such as goal setting. Jao and McDougall (2016) surface what we intuitively know: teachers, in their desire to support students, are creative, resourceful, passionate, and innovative, and administrative support in creating conditions for success is a major factor in building teacher capacity (Jao & McDougall, 2016).

Guiding Question Three: **Connecting Administrators to the Work of Students**

Will a greater degree of connection of district administrators to students in the classroom lead to more responsive assessments and curricula? How important is it for administrators to connect to the work of students and teachers? Will a closer connection to classrooms provide district administrators with a different understanding of what supporting students should look like? If administrators connect more deeply with students, will strategies for measuring student growth become more responsive to their needs?

As an administrator who works primarily at the district level, it can be difficult to feel connected to the classroom. The act of moving into educational leadership administration as a strategy to effect greater change has a cost: an educational administrator's daily obligations generally move them further away from the students to whom they are bound to serve. Despite that key paradox, Ochoa (2016) finds that inter–departmental collaboration amongst administrators at the district level, when paired with activities that foster direct connections between district staff and student work and outcomes, can create the conditions for more collaborative inter–disciplinary cultures to develop at the district level. This strategy connects administrators to their own essential work, as found in the work of students while fostering opportunities for staff at the district level to fully comprehend the work of the organization as a complex entity in its entirety (Ochoa, 2016).

The opportunity for district–level administrators to connect to the work of students could provide a valuable opportunity for administrators, particularly those tasked with compliance tracking, to connect their own compliance demands with the demonstrated needs of students. In this way, a built–in opportunity for reflection, one of the tenets of the transformative model, could be made concrete in the service of more equitable practice.

At its core, this PoP is about invisibility and missing voices, and the ways that students are erased when their educational needs are not met in the responsive ways that they deserve. The prioritized lines of inquiry discussed connect to that essential core and seek to consider the means to address it through a range of strategies and stakeholders.

Leadership Focused Vision for Change

The ESD has skilled and passionate teachers dedicated to serving the students with complex needs served within its programs, and yet a great deal of classroom time is occupied

with misaligned compliance demands. The ESD has responsively crafted a mission, vision, and values statement that reflects the needs of our students, staff, family, and community ([ESD], 2020), and yet the daily practice within our programs does not mirror the values within that document. These gaps are the factors that I must connect with as a transformative leader as I consider strategies to bring a vision for equitable systems for students into daily practice.

Current State

Currently, instead of being able to bring focused attention to urgent issues having to do with equitable and inclusive outcomes for students, teachers, and staff within the ESD's programs spend a disproportionate amount of their time engaged in the kind of compliance and accountability work that Fullan (2011) recognizes as antithetical to meaningful systems change and improved student outcomes. In order to implement meaningful change in support of equity for students, teachers must have opportunities for intentional and strategic peer interactions and professional development trainings that are recognized as being the means to capacity building (Jao & McDougall, 2016; Shirrell et al., 2019; Stein & Coburn, 2008). Time that teachers spend on misaligned and inappropriate compliance tasks represents a missed opportunity, devoted to work that neither allows them to hone their own pedagogical skills with peers, nor connect new skills to the work of improving student outcomes. In addition to lost opportunities for capacity building with peers, time spent on compliance and accountability mandates has direct opportunity costs for students. Teachers do not have adequate time to design instruction and assessment tools that meet the needs of students who require significant supports, with student outcomes suffering as a result.

Vision for a Future State

A consideration of the community within which we live, and how best to serve that community, must include all members of that community. Furman (2004), in articulating how communities can actively engage with the idea of the common good, puts forth several strategies that center the school as the catalyst for change. Schools have a unique opportunity to provide the physical and psychological space that can support open and inclusive engagement with their communities in service of meeting student needs in a responsive and appropriate way (Furman, 2004). Further, Furman (2004) suggests that schools, through engaging in iterative action research with school and community stakeholders, can move dialogue and common understanding to a place of actionable steps that promote equity and inclusion.

A community that provides inclusive access for all community members co–creates the conditions for a stronger community, and the school setting provides the ideal place to innovate more just and equitable practices for the larger community. Frick & Frick (2010) frame the school community as a powerful locus of change that can begin the process of reflecting and modeling potential change to the community beyond its walls. As an educator who has almost exclusively served students with complex needs over the course of my career, advocacy for equitable student outcomes is the highest priority for me as a special education administrator. As a citizen living in a country largely driven by neoliberal values across contexts and settings (Hursh, 2006; Hursh, 2016; Apple, 2017), I would like to see both my school community and the broader community move toward more inclusive and equitable practices.

Collaborative practice and equitable outcomes for all students contribute to the larger community good found in lived values of diversity and inclusion, as well as specific and tangible improvements for staff, students, and families. Fullan (2011) suggests that good drivers, specifically those strategies that are predictive of increased achievement for all students, are

good because they change a school's culture and increase student outcomes for all. Culture change that is positively correlated with improved student outcomes for all students occurs through drivers that focus on collaborative work, capacity building, and systems change (Fullan, 2011).

In formulating questions that address what must be asked and understood prior to engaging in change, Frontier & Rickabaugh (2015) identify four essential questions to ask about change: why, how much, and where change should occur, as well as who must be part of the change process. If these questions are answered whilst centering student achievement and de–centering mandated change, the authors, like Fullan (2011) in his discussion of ineffective drivers, make the connection between increased staff engagement and student outcomes (Frontier & Rickabaugh, 2015).

Prioritized Areas for Change

The collaborative and inclusive process that was utilized in creating the ESD mission, vision, and values document ([ESD], 2020) demonstrates that the agency recognizes the value of inclusion and collaboration and can practice those values in crafting a mission and vision document. The values of equity, collaboration, and inclusion that the mission document highlights also demonstrate the ESD's prioritizing of these values ([ESD], 2020). In creating conditions for more equitable student outcomes, the ESD will bring its mission, vision, and values to life, moving closer to the mutually reinforcing ethical organization that Victor and Cullen (1988) describe.

It is important to recognize that change can often be intertwined and connected, with each change action affecting others in complex systems. With that understanding, the priorities for change are also interrelated and connected. The first priority begins with the outcome. Frontier

and Rickabaugh (2015) emphasize the need to establish the why of change, which is a centering of more equitable student outcomes for all students. This priority focuses on fostering targeted opportunities for staff engagement in designing solutions for student equity will support improved student outcomes (Fullan, 2011; Frontier & Rickabaugh, 2015; Hallinger & Heck, 2010). As described by Furman (2004), more inclusive and responsive communities start with our schools, and can be represented by curricula and assessments that are purpose built to meet our students' unique needs. Increased access to appropriate and responsive curricula and assessments is an equity issue, and one that will support better outcomes for ESD students as they navigate a complex world beyond school.

The second priority for change connects with the need for improved student outcomes, focusing on the assessments and curricula that will support those outcomes. The neoliberal audit culture is one that often creates mandates for assessment to measure growth that does not adequately support student needs (Apple, 2017; Hursh, 2006). When serving the students across the ESD's programs, creating more appropriate and accurate measurement and assessment tools for students is a priority for change. This change, which would align student assessment tools with demonstrated student need, will allow teachers and staff to provide instruction and measure growth in ways that always meets student need, rather than using assessment tools that meet a compliance demand.

In considering Frontier and Rickabaugh's questions of where change needs to happen, and who needs to be part of it, the third change priority of teacher–driven capacity–building becomes clear. Change that allows those affected by it, be they students or staff, to be active participants in its creation and implementation is change that is more likely to find success (Frontier & Rickabaugh, 2015). The role of engaged and passionate teachers and principals in

affecting change in service of improved student outcomes is understood (Dentith et al., 2013; Fullan, 2011; Hallinger, 1992; Hallinger & Heck, 2010). When combined with the reality of the ESD's geographically dispersed classrooms, creating intentional opportunities for teachers to collaborate and build capacity becomes an essential priority for change in support of equitable and inclusive student outcomes.

Change Drivers

Functioning as a blueprint and a roadmap, the ESD's mission vision and values statement can be characterized as an external change driver. This document, with its stated values of equity, community, and collaboration, also provides an opportunity for connecting to internal drivers in a meaningful way.

Internal drivers that will lead to meaningful systems–level change are group work and collaboration that supports capacity–building (Fullan, 2011). For change to be effective and meaningful, change must be centered on student achievement, and focused on systems–level changes that improve outcomes for all students (Fullan, 2011; Frontier & Rickabaugh, 2015). Fullan (2011) suggests that collaborative practice in service of student achievement is a primary driver that must always be prioritized for change to be implemented at the systems–wide level.

An important internal driver that supports equitable student outcomes is the need to support teacher autonomy in building their own capacity to support student outcomes. Bouffard (2019), in highlighting the importance of a strong organizational culture, connects that to building capacity for teachers in support of student growth. Creating opportunities for teachers to identify their own needs as they work to support equitable student outcomes can create the conditions for powerful and meaningful change. When teachers are given the power to consider the underlying reasons and goals associated with their collaborative work and empowered to

critically consider their practice, there is an opportunity for increased capacity that meets their needs authentically, in a way that top–down mandates cannot (Philpott & Oates, 2017).

An important internal change driver that could promote a higher degree of inclusion for ESD students is the implementation of intentional opportunities for general education teachers to engage with teachers within ESD programs, thus building capacity and moving toward increased inclusion of ESD students in partner teacher classrooms. Touching as it does on capacity–building, culture building, and systemic change, this driver meets Fullan's criteria for an effective change driver (Fullan, 2011). Blackmore (2011) suggests that change is by nature a relational endeavor, and Fullan (2011) identifies effective drivers as being those that address issues of culture. In this context, this driver can be positioned within the context of a culture that values inclusive practice. In a study of the barriers to inclusive educational opportunities for students with complex needs, Paju et al. (2018) note that an essential way to disrupt these barriers is to provide supported opportunities for teachers to gain an understanding of inclusive practice. Most teaching programs in the United States are focused on either special education or general education teaching practices, but rarely both. As a result, the majority of teachers are unfamiliar with special education pedagogy, or effective and equitable strategies for supporting students with complex needs.

Working with the values foregrounded in the ESD's mission, vision and values document will allow the agency to connect with its values and bring them into lived reality. In this way, these organizational values, borne through collaboration and community, can in turn provide the compass for the internal change that must take place for equity.

Organizational Readiness for Change

The current of neoliberal values that runs through American education and its audit culture (Apple, 2017; Hursh, 2006) is in opposition to the mission, vision, and values of collaboration, inclusion, and equity articulated by the ESD ([ESD, 2020]). The tension between these opposing values can manifest itself in a variety of ways in staff behavior and beliefs, depending on their own bias and positionality. Staff may not recognize an urgent need to support more equitable and inclusive student outcomes and may demonstrate resistance to practices grounded in equity. Bunea et al. (2016) suggest that organizational change is iterative as well as nonlinear and depends on factors such as organizational resistance to change or stakeholder capacity. Resistance, particularly stakeholder's resistance to reform, is identified across change readiness models and needs to be anticipated and expected (Hynds, 2010). As a school leader positioned to lead change within the ESD, it is essential to anticipate resistance to change in all its complexity and simultaneously work to create inclusive and collaborative processes that allow for the formation of a unified change vision over a sustained period of time (Hynds, 2010). This can be achieved through regular and informal opportunities for staff to provide feedback and input, as well as seeking feedback from a wide range of individuals when implementing change readiness assessments.

The inclusive and collaborative processes utilized over multiple years in creating the ESD mission, vision, and values ([ESD], 2020) must now be connected to the concrete change needed to support equitable outcomes for the ESD's exceptional students. Ultimately, change is an effort that must be engaged with by a community of stakeholders in an inclusive and relational way. As Blackmore (2011) suggests, change is an inherently relational endeavor, necessitating a demonstrated grasp of nuance and emotional intelligence to be successful.

Change readiness models, regardless of the process by which they engage with the questions of change, are designed to comprehensively assess the organization's change capacity prior to moving toward implementation (Weiner, 2009; Holt et al., 2007). Many change readiness tools also recognize the importance of implementing collaborative structures that seek input and feedback from multiple internal and external stakeholders, identifying the benefit to creating horizontal team structures as change is considered (Edmondson et al., 2019; Hynds, 2010). As a transformative leader, and a leader situated within an organization whose mission, vision, and values center equity and collaboration, it is important that the process and tools used to assess change readiness within the organization are aligned with these values. In this context, change readiness must be determined through processes that are open, transparent, and nonhierarchical. As a leader whose own stance is collaborative, dissenting voices are important for what they surface as issues of concern. Wide solicitation of stakeholders within the department also allows for a multitude of diverse voices and opinion to be heard. An assessment of change readiness will not be accurate if it is narrowly disseminated to like–minded individuals within the ESD.

Ultimately, change is complex, with many variables and strategies for engagement, and many levels and facets that must be considered prior to engaging in organizational change (Weiner, 2009). Within that complexity, however, common themes emerge. The need for clearly communicating the urgent need for change is common to many models of organizational change (Cawsey et al., 2016; Newcomb, 2008), as is the importance of energizing stakeholders as to the value of the change (see, e.g., Cawsey et al., 2016; Newcomb, 2008; Weiner, 2009). Another important component of many change models is the need to articulate the gap between the

current state and the desired state, in the context of assessing the capacity of stakeholders to engage in the work of change (Armenakis et al., 2000; Weiner, 2009).

Within the need to communicate an urgent need for change lies a possible tension with my preferred leadership stance of building consensus through collaborative practice that is as non–hierarchical as is practicable. A possible strategy to offset the idea of the leader unilaterally determining an issue of urgency might be to act as a person who simply provides the time, resources, and space for others to co–create change. In this role, communicating the urgent need for equitable and inclusive outcomes to staff could occur in the context of an invitation to interested individuals to self–identify as change agents. These change agents could be the forces that lead to a state of critical mass, supporting capacity–building for equity and inclusion across the student services department.

The change path model (CPM), with its flexible approach, seems particularly well suited to inclusive and collaborative change implementation that aligns with the ESD's mission, vision, and values (Cawsey et al., 2016; [ESD], 2020). For the purposes of assessing readiness, the authors' awakening stage creates opportunities for the use of collaborative structures and practices to work toward consensus on the actions needed for more equitable and inclusive outcomes for students with complex needs. Similarly, for the problem in its context, the value of Kotter's change model lies in its focus on collaborative work and the importance of connecting with what is considered an urgent concern (Newcomb, 2008).

In terms of using a specific scale for measuring the ESD's organizational capacity, it is important that a scale can adequately assess capacity for change whilst also reflecting the values that have already been prioritized by the agency in its mission, vision, and values statement. Judge and Douglas (2009), after an extensive literature review that identified and incorporated

the essential elements of many organizational change readiness tools, developed a scale that aligns the important parameters for measuring change readiness within the ESD. This change readiness tool identifies eight specific domains that are important for assessing change readiness, as seen in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Dimensions Associated With Organizational Capacity for Change (OCC)

(1) *Trustworthy leadership.* The ability of senior executives to earn the trust of the rest of the organization and to show organizational members the way to meet its collective goals (Barney and Hansen, 1994).

(2) *Trusting followers.* The ability of the non-executive employees to constructively dissent with and/or willingly follow a new path advocated by its senior executives (Kelley, 1992).

(3) *Capable champions.* The ability of an organization to attract, retain, and empower change leaders to evolve and emerge (Kanter, 1983).

(4) *Involved mid-management.* The ability of middle managers to effectively link senior executives with the rest of the organization (Floyd and Wooldridge, 1996).

(5) *Innovative culture.* The ability of the organization to establish norms of innovation and encourage innovative activity (Kotter and Heskett, 1992).

(6) *Accountable culture.* The ability of the organization to carefully steward resources and successfully meet pre-determined deadlines (Ulrich *et al.*, 1999).

(7) *Effective communication.* The ability of the organization to communicate vertically, horizontally, and with customers (Oshry, 1996).

(8) *Systems thinking.* The ability of the organization to focus on root causes and recognize the interdependencies within and outside the organizational boundaries (Kilmann, 1991).

Note. Reprinted from "Organizational change capacity: the systematic development of a scale," by W. Judge and T. Douglas, 2009, *Journal of Organizational Change Management, 22*(6), pp. 635–649 (https://doi-org.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/10.1108/09534810910997041). Copyright 2009 by the Journal of Organizational Change Management.

The authors have created a 10–point Likert scale inventory that assigns four questions per domain, providing a brief yet powerful assessment tool that assesses an organization's capacity for change in each of those eight domains (Judge & Douglas, 2009). With its focus on trust, communication, transparency, innovation, and systems thinking (Judge & Douglas, 2009), this tool mirrors both the collaborative values embedded within the ESD's mission statement, as well as the leadership values that have been identified in my own stance.

Judge and Douglas's scale captures the essential complexity and inter–dependence of the elements that contribute to an organization's capacity and readiness for change, with the connections between the domains implicit and yet explicit from a leadership lens. Each domain flows from the previous one, making the connections between them seamless and intuitive while creating a holistic and complete entity that captures the most essential and inter–related elements of change readiness.

The ESD's change readiness will best be assessed using the 32–question inventory that is associated with the eight–domain scale. The challenge lies in identifying the stakeholders, both internal and external, whose feedback should be sought. There is a danger of a leader having blind spots that allow them to miss essential voices both in defining needed change, and implementing that change (Cawsey et al., 2016), so a careful process of assessing needed stakeholders will help to accurately determining change readiness. In determining the stakeholders whose feedback is essential in assessing change readiness, a team of individuals in a wide variety of roles across the department would provide a diverse set of voices that would control for bias and blind spots. Similarly, inviting stakeholders to engage in the work would be appropriate in the context of creating collaborative and non–hierarchical communities engaged in

change for equity. Creating anonymized surveys administered by a third party would create trust and provide a firewall against inappropriate use of feedback.

I believe that the ESD is ready for this change. The organization has passionate educators who are dedicated to supporting their student's needs, a mission, vision, and values document that grounds its values in equity, diversity, community, and collaboration, and a board that uses those values as its compass ([ESD], 2020). These are powerful supports that will allow the organization to move forward with the change our students need. Working together with our community, the organization can fulfil the promise of equity inherent in our mission, vision, and values, and in the passion of our educators.

Conclusion

Despite being embedded within a neoliberal context, the ESD has articulated at the organizational level the collaborative and equity–oriented values that will serve the organization. As individuals and groups within the special education department engage with the work of improving outcomes for students with complex needs, the values embedded within the mission document must now be brought to fruition in the form of equitable and responsive curricula and assessments. Now is the time for the organization to meet the bar that it has set for itself. In practice, the organization must demonstrate at the relational level its commitment to these values, becoming one of many islands of collaboration and genuine equity thriving within the neoliberal landscape that American education finds itself.

Chapter Two: Setting the Stage for Change

While Chapter One focuses on situating the PoP within its historical and socio-economic context, Chapter Two is concerned with positioning the PoP within the factors that will come to bear on the change needed to address it. An important factor guiding the change discussed in this

chapter are the tenets of transformative leadership that guide me as I prioritize change actions. This transformative framework is embedded within critical theory, with its focus on the disruption of systems that support inequity. The PoP is considered through the lens of several change theories and their alignment with both my values as a leader and the needs of the organization. The gap between current and future state is articulated through an organizational analysis that considers the interaction of internal and external factors and the gap between current and present state in order to identify the priority gaps (Nadler & Tushman, 1989; Cawsey et al., 2016). Possible solutions are considered, with a recommended solution to the PoP articulated that aligns with the needs and capacity of the organization and its stakeholders. Finally, the ethical considerations of the proposed changes are considered and contextualized within the transformative leadership lens.

Leadership Approaches to Change

Fundamentally, the PoP is about challenging established notions of assessment that are marginalizing students, which aligns with the transformative tenet of challenging knowledge frameworks that perpetuate inequity (Shields, 2018; Shields & Hesbol, 2020). Taken as a whole, the tenets of transformative leadership provide a blueprint for engaging with the problem, each capturing an element of the complex dynamics that must be considered as a transformative leader considering the problem of inequitable and marginalizing assessments for students.

Transformative leadership has as its core mandate the implementation of "deep and equitable change (Shields, 2018, p. 20). Within this leadership lens, systems that marginalize and minoritize students are dismantled and replaced with equitable systems reflecting student strengths and needs (Shields, 2018; Shields & Hesbol, 2020). The tenets of the transformative model, discussed below, are well positioned to meet the needs of the PoP. Transformative

leadership's focus on inclusive and democratic processes to effect equitable and emancipatory change meets the needs of the problem itself, as well as how the problem must be engaged with by the stakeholders.

The Transformative Model: Values and Tenets

As illustrated in Figure 3, Shields and Hesbol (2020) frame a robust model of the transformative leadership model, outlining its essential values and tenets. The two central propositions to the model are the interwoven ideas of the private good, or that which benefits individual students, as existing concurrently with the public good, or civic and democratic values that represent all people in a society (Shields & Hesbol, 2020). This focus on the connection between the private and the public good in the service of deep democracy echoes the ideas put forward by Furman (2004) in her work on the ethics of community.

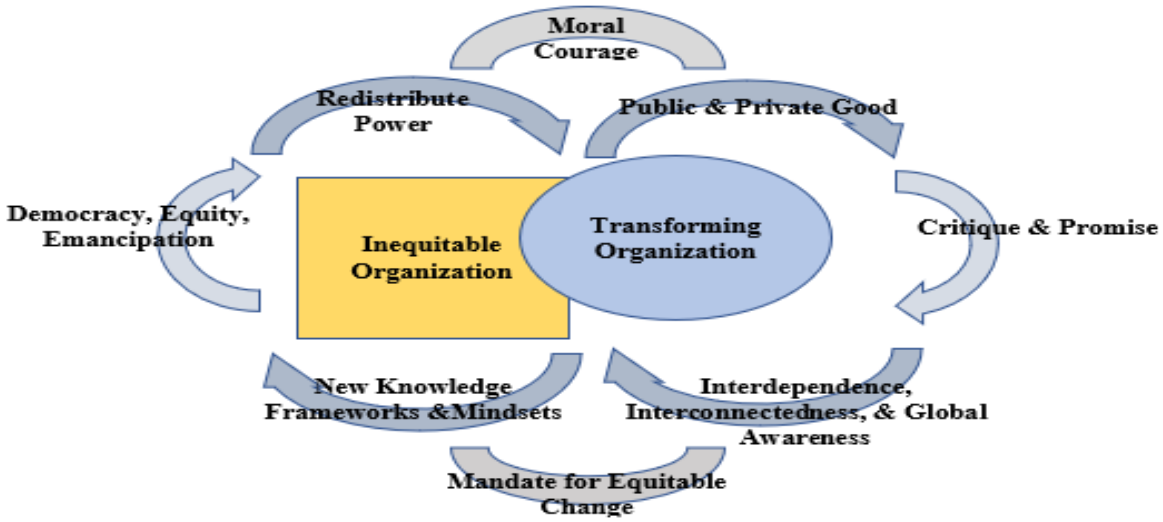
Shields and Hesbol (2020) outline eight tenets that are foundational in the transformative model, as shown in Figure 3. These include the following:

- a mandate for equitable change based that begins with an understanding of individual and organizational values;
- questioning and changing knowledge frameworks rooted in inequity;
- a balance of public and private good;
- considering power dynamics and redistributing power for change;
- pedagogical approaches that foreground democratic, emancipatory, and equitable practices;
- embedding students in an interconnected and independent educational community;
- critiquing inequitable systems and then building equitable ones; and

- a recognition that the work requires moral courage (Shields & Hesbol, 2020)

Figure 3:

Model of Transformative Leadership Theory



Note. Adapted from "Transformative Leadership Approaches to Inclusion, Equity, and Social Justice," by C. Shields and K. Hesbol, 2020, *Journal of School Leadership, 30*(1), p. 6 (https://doi.org/10.1177/1052684619873343). Copyright 2020 by Sage Publishing.

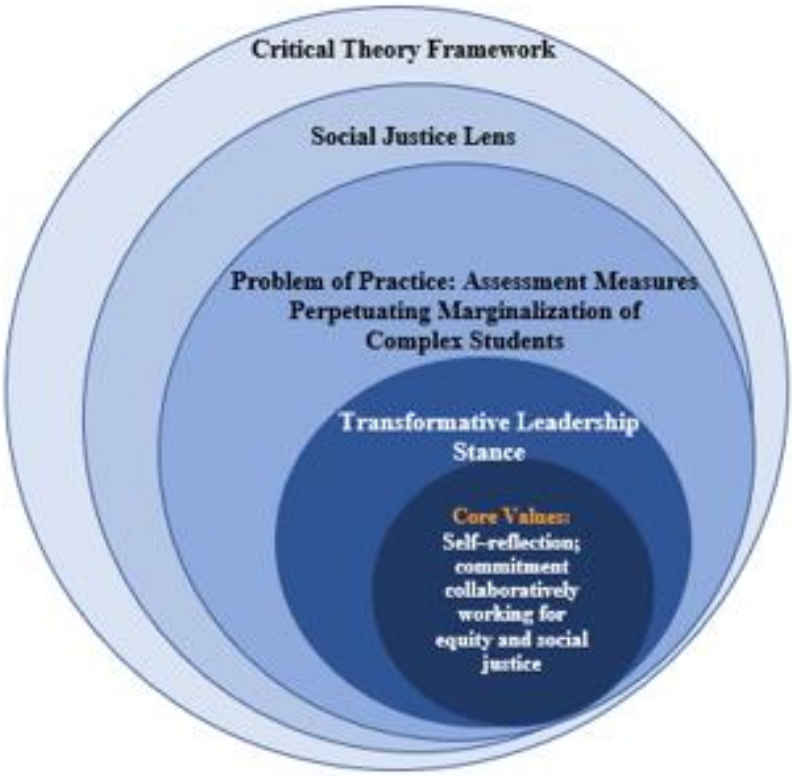
At its heart, the work of education must be rooted in moral values that are embedded in equity and can be made concrete in the work with students (Shields, 2018; Shields & Mohan, 2008). A transformative leadership approach, with its focus on democratic policy and practice in service of equitable outcomes for students, is purpose–built to engage with the issues of inequity and marginalization for students that represent the core of this problem. Ultimately, the theory must be manifest in change that supports the PoP itself, resulting in systems change that allows for students to be taught and assessed in ways that are responsive to their needs.

Situating Transformative Leadership Within the Critical Theory Framework

Transformative leadership's focus on reflection, collaborative practice, and critical consideration of existing knowledge frameworks is driven by a focus on social justice. In turn, this social justice stance is situated within the critical theory framework, with its focus on the disruption of systems of inequity. As shown in Figure 4, these interconnected systems provide the strong foundation that allow leaders and educators to disrupt inequitable systems and collaboratively work to implement concrete change actions. As applied to this PoP, these implemented changes can improve students' lives in measurable ways through the creation of assessment measures that reflect student need in support of equitable outcomes.

Figure 4:

Relationship Between Transformative Lens and Critical Framework



As a transformative leader committed to co–creating systems that dismantle inequity and marginalization whilst supporting the needs of all students (Shields, 2018), leadership must start from a place of self–reflection. This self–reflective stance considers my complicity in perpetuating these inequitable systems and demands a commitment to change. Shields (2018) suggests that a transformative leader must begin the work of dismantling inequitable systems in order to build more equitable ones by building the relationships that will sustain the difficult and complex work of change. My stance as a transformative leader demands that I move my own awareness of inequity toward a space of analyzing the beliefs, of myself and others, that perpetuate marginalization (Shields, 2018). Finally, the critical piece that I must undertake as a transformative leader is a call to action (Shields, 2018). The call to action is a hallmark of change theories such as is found in the work of John Kotter (Cawsey et al., 2016), but the call to action within the transformative frame finds it as part of a process that begins with self–reflection through to critical analysis and action for equitable change (Shields, 2018). As a transformative leader working within a critical framework, the work can begin with self–reflection, but it must ultimately disrupt systems of inequity while building new systems based on equity and inclusion (Shields, 2018; Shields & Hesbol, 2020). Transformative leadership as I conceive of it must always center the needs of students, with all process relating back to the framework's mandate for equitable change.

Framework for Leading the Change Process

There are many change theories to consider when assessing how to frame and guide change within an organization. Many of these theories are interconnected, and are themselves representative of incremental change, refinement, and improvement across time. Considering the

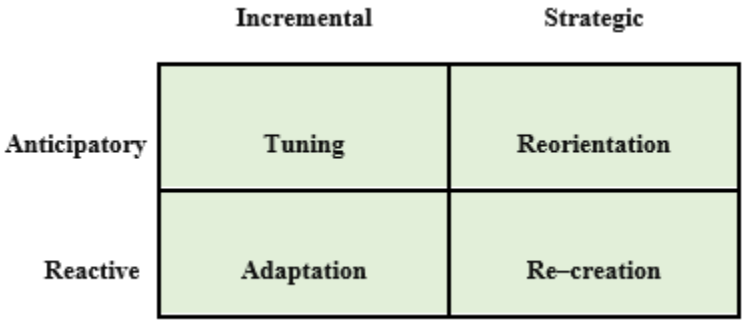
types of change needed by the organization in conjunction with the key elements of specific change theories can provide a path forward (Cawsey et al., 2016).

Types of Organizational Change

Nadler and Tushman have created a framework that conceptualizes the kind of change that is needed by an organization, as shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5:

Types of Organizational Change



Note. Adapted from "Organizational Frame Bending: Principles for Managing Reorientation," by D. Nadler and M. Tushman, 1989, *The Academy of Management Executive*, *3*(3), p. 196 (https://doi.org/10.5465/AME.1989.4274738). Copyright 1989 by the Academy of Management Executive.

In Figure 5, change is characterized as being situated along one of two axes. The x–axis, incremental versus strategic change, relates to the scope of the change across one component (incremental) or the entirety (strategic) of an organization (Nadler & Tushman, 1987). The y–axis addresses change that anticipates or reacts to external factors. Nadler and Tushman (1987) suggest that there are four types of change that can be situated within this model: tuning, reorientation, adaptation, and recreation. As an example, using this model, tuning would be a

type of organizational change that is incremental in nature, and made in anticipation of events that will be brought to bear on an organization, and so on (Nadler and Tushman, 1987).

Using this model, the change that is being proposed in support of this PoP—the implementation of equitable curricula and assessments for student with complex needs—would best be characterized as recreating change (Nadler & Tushman, 1987). Although there is not an existential threat to the organization, as Nadler and Tushman (1987) characterize recreating change, there is little doubt that this change is reactive, in the sense that the gap exists at this time, and the state of marginalization and inequity creates an urgency that demands a radical re–imagining of the systems that serve students with complex needs. In addition, this change is by no means incremental; the scope of the change is wide and will affect systems across the organization as issues of inequity are considered and disrupted (Cawsey et al., 2016; Nadler & Tushman, 1987).

Framing Theories of Change

It is often the case that stakeholders within an organization may know what needs to change but are not clear on how to implement that change (Cawsey et al., 2016). When change is complex and multi–faceted, it can be difficult to identify the steps needed to implement it. In considering the problem of inequitable assessment tools that perpetuate systems of marginalization, the complexity of the problem will determine the change framework that should be used to address it.

Lewin's Stage Theory of Change

Lewin's stage theory of change, considered to be a seminal change model, consists of three stages, namely unfreeze, change, and refreeze. In the unfreeze stage, the need for change within a system leads to the elements within that system rejecting the usefulness of established

beliefs and practices (Cawsey et al, 2016). During the change stage of the Lewin model, an organization's systems, and the people within it, are open to change (Cawsey et al., 2016). The stage theory of change has as its final stage the refreezing stage, in which the change brought about in the fluid middle stage, having been completed, is now codified and established in an organization's systems and practices (Cawsey et al., 2016).

A key characteristic of the stage theory of change is its emphasis on the linear process of change, and the idea of change as a single and discrete event. In these ways, it is not a framing theory that can adequately engage with the diverse stakeholders and complex, iterative, and dynamic change (Cawsey et al., 2016; Cummings et al., 2016) that this OIP requires. Another key element of Lewin's theory is its underlying premise of stakeholders having a common understanding of the organization's current state. Given the transformative model's mandate to engage a diverse range of stakeholders and the complexity of the organization itself, the stage theory of change does not capture the complex perspectives of stakeholders (Cawsey et al., 2016).

The stage theory of change, in its simplicity, is best considered as a starting place for understanding change, and the shoulders upon which later framing theories of change stand (Cawsey et al., 2016; Cummings et al., 2016). Ultimately, the complexity of the many internal and external factors that come to bear on the central problem, including those mentioned above, suggests that the stage theory of change makes several assumptions that cannot meet the needs of the PoP under consideration.

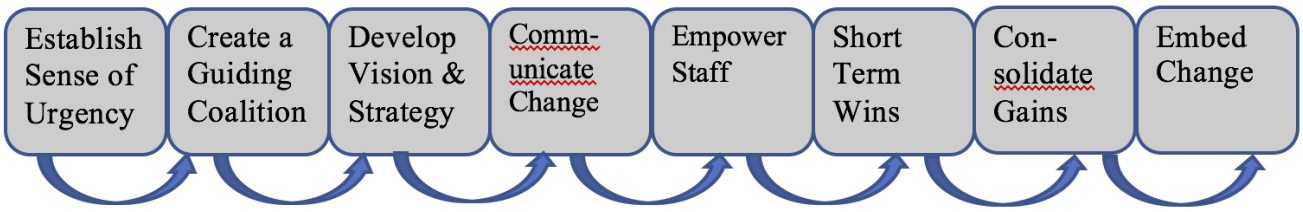
Kotter's Stage Model of Organizational Change

Another important change model is Kotter's stage model of organizational change. As shown in Figure 6, Kotter's model articulates a structured eight–stage model that is meant to be engaged with, as in Lewin's model, in a linear, sequential fashion (Cawsey et al., 2016).

The Kotter change model begins with the leader establishing and communicating a sense of urgency, and then building a guiding coalition of individuals whose positions allow them to leverage power in service of change (Cawsey et al., 2016; Kotter, 2012). These individuals collaborate to form a vision, which is then communicated widely to employees. At this time in the model, employees are empowered to implement change across settings and organizational structures, with systems shifting to facilitate these change actions. In order to maintain momentum over time, short term wins are acknowledged and celebrated, and change is consolidated and built upon. Finally, change that is successful is institutionalized within the organization (Cawsey et al., 2016; Kotter, 2012).

Figure 6

Kotter's Eight-Stage Process



Note. Adapted from *Organizational Change – An Action-Oriented Toolkit* (3rd ed.), by T. Cawsey, G. Deszca, and C. Ingols, 2016, p. 48, Sage. Copyright 2016 by Sage Publishing.

As Sidorko (2008) suggests, Kotter provides a structured approach that can be useful in its linear and prescriptive nature. However, when taken as a whole this model is overly reliant on

a sequential process that is by its nature insufficiently iterative and does not account for the complex nature of the PoP. Kotter (1997) maintains that the process is not leader–centered by nature, and that a guiding coalition is needed to enact meaningful and sustainable change. However, as Sidorko (2008) suggests, Kotter's idea of a guiding coalition does not account for complex problems and structures that may require more than one coalition. In addition, the guiding coalition in this model is understood to be primarily composed of individuals in power positions to facilitate change, an idea that is in opposition to transformative notion of democratic and collective change work.

Appelbaum et al. (2012) suggest that the Kotter model may not be "monarchical" (p. 768), and yet each of the model's eight steps centers the leader and the guiding coalition in the actions contained within it. There is a fundamental assumption that change is initiated through coalition building amongst leaders which is then communicated to staff (Kotter, 1995; Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008). By explicitly framing individuals in power positions as a key component by which change can be implemented (Appelbaum et al., 2012; Kotter, 1997), there is a fundamental conflict between Kotter's model and the collaborative and democratic change that is central to the transformative leadership model (Shields, 2018; Shields & Hesbol, 2020).

For an OIP primarily focused on the need to create equitable and responsive student assessment measures, Kotter's model is neither deeply democratic nor is it collaborative or iterative in nature. Despite the ways that Kotter's change model may be misaligned for the needs of an appropriate change implementation plan, there are elements, such as the articulation of an urgent need for change and the need to celebrate short term wins, that are useful to utilize and incorporate into other change models. This incorporation will be discussed more fully in Chapter Three's discussion of the change implementation plan.

Change Path Model

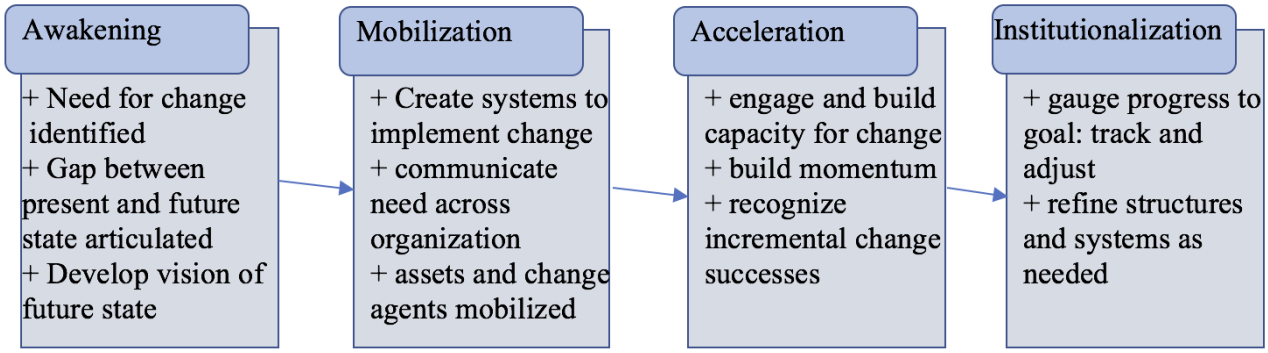
Cawsey et al.'s change path model (CPM) is a model that blends the prescriptive nature of Kotter's model and the process–oriented work of Lewin's stage theory of change (Cawsey et al., 2016). The CPM consists of four stages that are explicitly aligned with specific actions at each stage (Cawsey et al., 2016). In the CPM, there is a greater degree of detail than Lewin's model, with a modular approach that recognizes the complexity and meandering path of change in a way that the prescriptive Kotter model does not (Cawsey et al., 2016). Lewin's model is composed of three stages that are not explicitly structured to be iterative in execution, which does not reflect the complex change that this implantation plan will require. The four-part modular structure of the CPM is also more conducive to multi–loop change, making it more appropriate for the complex and iterative change that will be discussed in the change implementation plan in Chapter Three.

The CPM is composed of four stages, as illustrated in Figure 7. The model begins with the awakening stage, concerned with organizational analysis and a consideration of the internal and external factors influencing the organization and the proposed change (Cawsey et al., 2016). Awakening provides the opportunity to engage closely with the problem in the context of the organization, allowing for a consideration of all factors that influence the problem. The next stage of the CPM is the mobilization stage, which is concerned with a clear articulation of the needed change, and the formulation and communication of a vision. The mobilization stage explicitly addresses issues of power dynamics, and important element that aligns with one of the transformative tenets (Cawsey et al., 2016; Shields & Hesbol, 2020). The third stage of the model is the acceleration stage, during which change agents continue to be incorporated and embedded in the change process, with implementation a central action at this stage (Cawsey et

al., 2016). This stage incorporates Kotter's notion of celebrating wins, which acknowledges the need to maintain and build momentum across the long path of complex change (Cawsey et al., 2016). The fourth stage of the model is institutionalization, which finds change embedded into the structures and systems of the organization (Cawsey et al., 2016). This stage allows for tracking and refining the change, recognizing that there will be the need to adjust and modify (Cawsey et al., 2016).

Figure 7

The Change Path Model



Note. Adapted from *Organizational Change – An Action-Oriented Toolkit* (3rd ed.), by T. Cawsey, G. Deszca, and C. Ingols, 2016, p. 55, Sage. Copyright 2016 by Sage Publishing.

The CPM allows for the complexity and dynamism inherent in organizational change at each of its stages. In the awakening stage, it is understood that there are many complex forces that will influence how an organization is able to engage with change, both within the organization itself, and beyond. As illustrated in Figure 7, this model consists of four stages: awakening, mobilization, acceleration, and institutionalization. Each stage concerned with a

specific set of tasks. The change path model is flexible and iterative in nature, and compatible with organizational analysis tools such as Nadler and Tushman's congruence model. One clear point of alignment is at the awakening stage of the change path model, in which organizational stakeholders must consider external influences in the context of how those influences from the outside environment will be addressed by the organization itself (Cawsey et al., 2016).

One possible limitation of the model could be the fact that its stages, while allowing for iterative change across time through a circular use of the stages, may not account for complex change that finds multiple stages in use at one time. Shields (2018) frames the change needed in our current inequitable environment as change that occurs in a VUCA, or "volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous", world (Shields, 2018, p. 4). The modular nature of the CPM is a welcome opportunity to engage in change in a less linear manner, but as Shields (2018) discusses, change in this chaotic time is messy and complex. In this context, the possibility exists that there may be several CPM stages underway simultaneously, reflecting the complexity of both the problem and the context itself.

An advantage of the mobilization stage of the change path model lies in its acknowledgment that change can be understood by leaders but must be collaboratively engaged with across organizational stakeholders (Cawsey et al., 2016). The model frames the need for collaborative practice as a means of acknowledging, engaging with, and benefiting from the different ways of knowing and capacities that exist concurrently within an organization's staff. This focus on collaborative process also aligns with a transformative leadership stance (Shields, 2018), and is central to the critical frame that undergirds the questions of equity and marginalization central to the OIP. Because this problem is fundamentally about bringing marginalized individuals more fully into a community that values justice and equity, a few things

are essential. The process of doing the work must be grounded in transparent and collaborative structures, and those structures must acknowledge systemic inequities and seek out absent voices and experiences. Without using a truly collaborative and democratic approach that includes a wide range of voices and stakeholders, there is a likelihood that the systems of marginalization will be reproduced again in a different form, simply because the frame used to implement change continues to be embedded in the systems that created the inequities in the first place.

As in the awakening stage, the mobilization stage, with its focus on factors such as internal systems and structures, processes, and internal stakeholders, is in alignment with critical organizational models such as the congruence model (Cawsey et al., 2016). The acceleration stage of the change path model is concerned with all the elements that are needed to implement the change actions that have been identified and communicated in the awakening and mobilization stages. The acceleration stage is concerned with building capacity across all stakeholders in the organization, through training, mentoring, and cultural shifts (Cawsey et al., 2016). An important way that the acceleration stage is aligned with the needs of the OIP and its context within an organization as complex as the ESD is the fact that this stage anticipates and plans for the need for a dynamic approach that is responsive to change at all points in the process.

The fourth stage of the change path model, institutionalization, is concerned with the way the identified priority changes are embedded within the organization (Cawsey et al., 2016). This stage is by no means the final part of the process, however, as the assumption is that change is ongoing, and will be monitored in a data–driven way and adjusted as needed. This flexible approach reflects the needs of a complex PoP that will continue to be influenced by complex and

dynamic internal and external factors, and thus need constant refinement to respond to the dynamic change swirling around it.

The CPM stands on the shoulders of giants in the realm of theories of change, including the essential ideas articulated in Lewin's stage theory of change (Cawsey et al., 2016; Cummings et al., 2016). Ultimately, the complexity of the change needed within the ESD requires an approach that allows for multiple iterations and adjustments across time and change cycles, a dynamic that is well suited to the CPM.

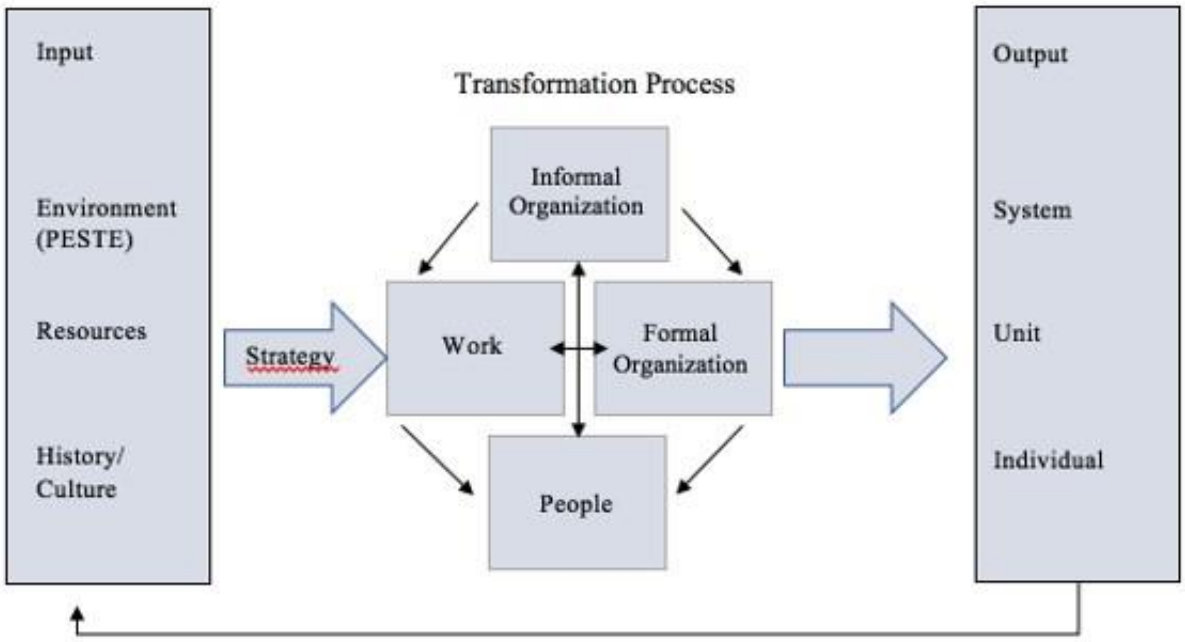
Critical Organizational Analysis

A good place to begin to articulate the needed change is to consider the gaps between current and optimal practice whilst identifying the priority gaps (Cawsey et al., 2016). It is within that gap that the essential questions of change reside, and within that gap where the answers lie as well. The challenge lies in providing form to this gap in a way that will clarify the actions needed to close it.

Nadler and Tushman's congruence model, which assumes that many complex and often contradictory factors come to bear on an organization seeking to implement change, is an appropriate framework to use to engage with the complex change needed within the ESD (Nadler & Tushman, 1989). As shown in Figure 8, the congruence model utilizes an open systems perspective, which holds that organizations exist within complex ecosystems with many interdependent internal and external components, all of which be considered as integral to the process of change (Nadler & Tushman, 1989; Cawsey et al., 2016).

Figure 8

Nadler and Cushman's Congruence Model



Note. Adapted from "Organizational Frame Bending: Principles for Managing Reorientation," by D. Nadler and M. Tushman, 1989, *The Academy of Management Executive*, *3*(3), p. 195 (https://doi.org/10.5465/AME.1989.4274738). Copyright 1989 by the Academy of Management Executive.

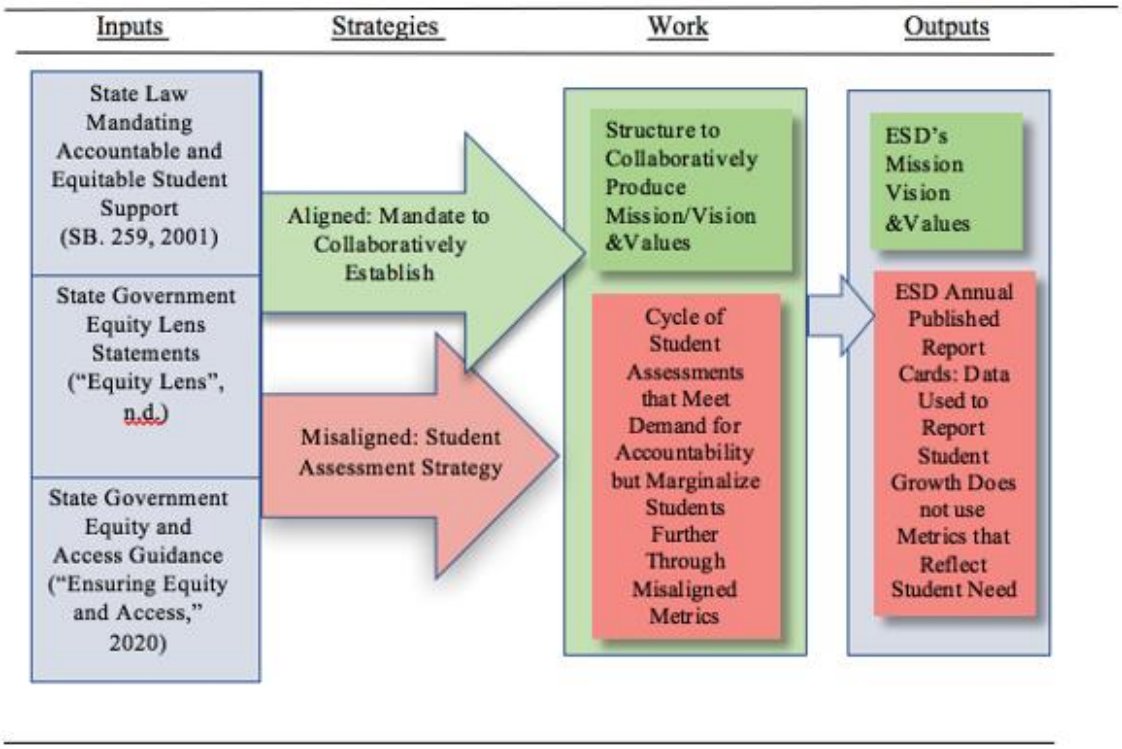
This open system demands a consideration of the external elements that affect an organization, as well as the degree of alignment, or congruence, between the external environment and the organization's internal factors (Cawsey et al., 2016). The model's concept of congruence also refers to the cohesion between the internal elements of an organization, such as the organization's internal culture, its systems and structures, the work that the organization does, and the people who undertake that work (Cawsey et al., 2016).

Within the congruence model, the external factors that come to bear on an organization should directly influence the strategies that the organization uses to accomplish its essential internal work (Cawsey et al., 2016). Ideally, these strategies are consciously decided upon, and represent the organization's aligned response to the external environment. The congruence model's attention to the external environment makes it possible to identify gaps, specifically, the places of misalignment between external factors and internal elements in the strategies that an organization uses to implement change. These gaps are the places where there is slippage between what an organization says it will do, and what it does (Cawsey et al., 2016). The congruence model allows for a consideration of both alignment and misalignment within the ESD.

There is no doubt that the external influence of neoliberalism, with its emphasis on assessments, compliance, and accountability, influences the ways that the organization measures student growth (Apple, 2017; Hursh, 2006; Hursh, 2016). On a certain level, the ESD's systems of student assessment are in complete alignment with an external environment that is significantly influenced by the audit culture (Apple, 2017). However, when misaligned student assessment strategies are seen as one of several organizational responses to external factors such as state law and public agency guidance regarding equity, inconsistencies and misalignments between external factors and organizational strategies and responses can be seen. The ESD's responses to external factors alternately reflect either the neoliberal values of accountability and compliance embedded within state law and government guidance, or the rhetoric around equity and equal access embedded within those same documents ("Ensuring Equity and Access," 2020; "Equity Lens", n.d.; SB. 259, 2001). The tensions between aligned and misaligned responses to external forces are represented in Figure 9.

Figure 9

The Congruence Model: Alignment and Misalignment Throughlines in the ESD



Note. Adapted from "Organizational Frame Bending: Principles for Managing Reorientation," by D. Nadler and M. Tushman, 1989, *The Academy of Management Executive*, *3*(3), pp. 194-204 (https://doi.org/10.5465/AME.1989.4274738). Copyright 1989 by the Academy of Management Executive.

The systemized and interdependent nature of the congruence model represents a through line: from external forces, then to the strategies that respond to those forces, on to the internal elements of the organization that support transformation, and finally, to the outputs that represent the organization's productive response to the needs of the internal environment (Cawsey et al., 2016). In addition to providing a framework that considers the effectiveness and alignment of the ESD's organizational responses to external factors, the model also provides strategies for

ensuring that each of the organization's internal factors are aligned with all other internal factors (Cawsey et al., 2016). A consideration of each of the internal elements within the model—the people, work, culture, and structures of the organization—allows for an assessment of the current capacity that the organization has for change, and what needs to shift to create that change (Cawsey et al., 2016). Within the ESD's student services department, the current state finds a great deal of staff time and resources engaged in work that focuses on misaligned assessments for students. The informal organization, or culture, of the organization is largely preoccupied with the tracking of these assessments that aim to measure and report student growth. Finally, the formal organization, or the structures within the organization, are hierarchical and somewhat rigid and non–porous. This rigidity supports a culture of assessment, compliance and accountability that is disconnected from student need. The congruence model identifies the internal elements of work, people, structure, and culture as key loci of change. The ESD must transform how it supports students. In order to ensure that it is engaged in anti–oppressive pedagogical practices, it must abandon student assessment practices that oppress, marginalize, and exclude student lived experience, and move toward ones that measure genuine growth and empower students (Kumashiro, 2000; Shields, 2018). To do this, it is essential that a change framework considers each of the four internal elements contained within the congruence model and implements change actions within each of these internal domains.

Gap Between Present and Future State

In considering the four internal elements of work, people, structure, and culture, the current gaps between current and optimal future practice in each can provide a blueprint for the priority shifts that need to occur within the ESD. As can be expected within a complex organization such as the ESD, there are several gaps that come to bear on the central problem,

with the challenge being the identification of those gaps that could be considered priorities to address. Understanding that inclusion within this paper does not constitute an inclusive process of identifying priority gaps to address, some potential key gaps and potential solutions in each of the congruence model transformation domains can be seen in Table 1. Taken as a whole, the needed changes coalesce around several themes:

- a need for greater transparency in communication,
- a commitment to foregrounding student equity in all interactions,
- providing multi–modal and low barrier to entry collaborative opportunities for stakeholders across roles and in the community,
- an emphasis on inclusion of community and family stakeholder voice and input at multiple opportunities across the agency

Table 1

Gaps in Organizational Components

Context	Formal Organization (hierarchy/structure)	Informal Organization (culture)	Tasks (work)	People
Current State	Few opportunities for cross–hierarchy and cross–program discussion of policies and systems in place to support students. Cross–hierarchy opportunities are focused on providing compliance guidance. No open–ended, less–structured time for collaboration across programs. Some collaborative structures in place between teachers and families.	Expectation that staff follow chain of command regarding concerns. Concerns are siloed into one–to–one communications and not transparent. Little communication between staff from different programs, with exception of related service staff such as OT, SLP, etc. Some communication with families in the context of COVID closures and distance learning.	Prioritized tasks are concerned with maintaining compliance and assessing student growth using measures considered to be appropriate and provided from the top down. No input sought from teachers or classroom staff.	People within programs work within their program hierarchy to solve problems, rather than within the larger student services department.
Future State	Built–in opportunities for cross–hierarchical and	Staff encouraged to raise issues and concerns	Staff at all levels of the department have	With the support of formal organizational

	cross–program policy discussion regarding systems to support students. Opportunities for collaboration are available and somewhat unstructured and open ended, with staff identifying priority areas of need within a frame of promoting equity and just outcomes.	with appropriate staff person who can best address it. Culture of transparency ensures that these concerns are more visible to the department, leading to more open and collaborative communication across roles and programs, as well as including input from families and community members.	input on the priority tasks regarding supporting students. Formal and flattened hierarchical structures provide time and resources for collaboratively identifying priorities.in a way that manages for power dynamics.	changes, as well as cultural ones, people begin to see themselves as members of the student services department, jointly responsible for just and equitable outcomes for students across all the department's programs. Families, students, and community are included in more scheduled collaborative opportunities.
Needed Changes	Scheduling of semi–structured virtual/in–person meetings to frame the need for change. Planning opportunities that currently exist for family input are given clear and consistent structure to elicit quality input and inform of other opportunities for participation.	Communication of transparent communication means: could include regular surveys, informal listening sessions open to all, office hours for all staff, published staff directory framed as a way to communicate across roles and programs based on need.	Open–entry interest group formation providing opportunities for transparent communication and solution–oriented work in support of students. Group power dynamics managed through a protocol design such as courageous conversations, circles, etc.	See structural changes in preceding three columns. Focus on structured and semi–structured opportunities for input across roles and programs; inclusion through multiple modes of information seeking (surveys, open–door policy; listening sessions, democratically structured interest groups.

Note. Adapted from "Organizational Frame Bending: Principles for Managing Reorientation," by D. Nadler and M. Tushman, 1989, *The Academy of Management Executive, 3*(3), p. 194–204 (https://doi.org/10.5465/AME.1989.4274738). Copyright 1989 by the Academy of Management Executive.

Regarding the outputs of the congruence model, "what is measured is what gets done" (Cawsey et al., 2016, p. 72), and in the case of the ESD's focus on student assessments, this is the essential truth that is also the central challenge at the heart of the PoP. In its unwavering focus on misaligned assessment measures, the ESD's student services department is further marginalizing already marginalized students while simultaneously crowding out the opportunity

to consider assessment tools that genuinely measure real growth. It is sapping resources from the passionate educators who know the students best and are best able to collaborate in support of interventions and assessments that both foster, and measure, genuine, and genuinely empowering, student growth. It is essential that we are intentional about what we choose to measure, because that choice makes all the difference.

Possible Solutions to Address the Problem of Practice

In using assessment measures that satisfy external compliance demands but are fundamentally misaligned with the needs of exceptional students, the ESD is further marginalizing students who are already marginalized. The external inputs, specifically, the systems and values of neoliberalism's audit culture that undergird this dynamic, are complex and far reaching beyond the agency (Apple, 2017; Hursh, 2006). Despite the scale and complexity of the values and systems that come to bear on the problem of misaligned assessments that do not capture student need or measure student growth, the initial solutions that address the problem must begin at a smaller scale, and rest within the agency of leaders and staff engaged with it at all levels within the organization (Fullan, 2001; Hargreaves, 2019).

With this in mind, three proposed solutions are explored, with attention paid to the priorities and goals, as well as the resources needed, for each. The proposed solutions are considered in comparison, with a change path determined that outlines the ways that the chosen solution is best suited to the context of the problem. To best assess these proposed solutions, each is considered in a way that addresses the following:

- stakeholders engaged for each proposed solution;
- the work to be undertaken by the stakeholders for each solution;
- the goals of the proposed solution;

- the shifts in priority that would occur with the proposed solution; and
- the array of resources needed for each proposed solution.

Proposal #1: Knowledge Community for Classroom Staff

In order to engage with the problem of student assessments that are misaligned with need, it makes sense to engage and empower the staff who work directly with the students on a daily basis. Certainly, the use of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) is a strategy that has been used for several decades, and one that has been successful to varying degrees (Hargreaves, 2019). Hargreaves (2019) suggests that PLCs are often prescriptive and programmatic, as well as being often structured in a way that is either overtly or covertly top–down, a dynamic which can discourage genuine collaboration. Educators who are empowered to guide their own learning goals and objectives are more likely to work toward those goals, and engage with capacity building (Hargreaves, 2019; Philpott & Oates, 2017).

A more inclusive structure, and one that is less prescriptive and susceptible to top–down mandates, would be a knowledge community composed of the classroom staff who work directly with students. Knowledge communities value individual experience and input and are "rooted in the experiences of its members and the context of their own work" (Seaman, 2008, p. 272). A central function of a knowledge community is the sharing of knowledge, as opposed to the creation of networks of relationships (Seaman, 2008; Olson & Craig, 2001). Knowledge communities are structures that acknowledge that individuals construct understanding through factors that include personal experience, context and situations across time, and interpersonal relationships (Olson & Craig, 2001). A knowledge community of classroom staff, bound together by what they individually and collectively know about serving students (Seaman, 2008), is a democratic structure that can provide opportunities for all staff's voices to be heard.

The stakeholders engaged in knowledge communities would be the staff closest to the work of supporting students, including paraprofessionals, related service staff such as occupational therapists (OTs), speech language pathologists (SLPs), and teachers. The priority work undertaken by these classroom stakeholders would begin with individual reflections on their understanding of the work that they do with students. Craig (1995) believes that this self–reflective, internal knowledge stance serves as the foundation of knowledge communities. These reflections and experiences would then be communicated with those within the classroom knowledge community (Seaman, 2008).

Classroom staff, working in a variety of roles, are typically the people who are tasked with carrying out assessment and compliance mandates that come from district–level administrators. Classroom staff are also those most familiar with student strengths and needs and are in a unique position to bring their understanding and experience to the task of understanding the gap between current assessment measures and those that would be most responsive to student need. Through their close work with students in the classroom, classroom knowledge communities are well positioned to identify the priority skills and growth metrics that would be most effective in assessing students.

This granular work, literally on the ground in each classroom, would need to be shared across programs when the classroom teams identify the assessment tools that are best able to measure growth and need, and thus work toward dismantling the systems that perpetuate marginalization.

Required Resources

Hargreaves (2019), in identifying an issue that PLCs are often beset by, highlights the importance of educators being both engaged in change, and empowered to change. A knowledge

community empowered to do the work of identifying change points for aligned student assessment needs time to dig into this work. Administrators, rather than imposing structures and goal and mandates from above, must create the conditions for success, and the time and space for the classroom group to both share their experience and consider this complex problem from multiple angles.

This proposal would require some degree of fiscal commitment, primarily relating to the need for staff to be provided with opportunities for collaborative and reflective work outside the classroom. Because this work would by design be guided by the needs of the CoP itself, this financial commitment is identified, but its scope is not defined at this time.

Technological needs would be of utmost importance, both due to the current pandemic–specific context of distance work for educators, and the geographically dispersed nature of the ESD programs that serve students. These needs would include ensuring that all classroom staff participating in the group had connectivity at their location, as well as a functioning tech device that would allow them to participate fully with the team. This would represent a shift in practice within the ESD, as currently there is a digital divide between classroom staff. Teachers are provided with devices to allow for connectivity, and there is no policy in place to ensure that paraprofessionals have access to these devices to support their work.

Proposal #2: Community of Practice for Site Administrators

Within this proposed solution, the stakeholders engaged include site administrators such as principals and assistant principals, as well as district–level administrators within the student services department. These stakeholders comprise a mix of administrators closer to the work of students, and those who are more engaged with ensuring that externally imposed standards of compliance are observed and met. In addition, district–level staff whose role relates to

curriculum and instruction could be included, to ensure that a common understanding that linked state standards with compliance needs for students served by IEPs could be built.

A community of practice (CoP) is, as its name implies, focused on improving practice through a community of practitioners (Seaman, 2008). CoPs can be structured or unstructured, formal, or informal, but they must include three things: a community, a shared domain of interest, and a shared practice (Wenger–Traynor & Wenger–Traynor, 2015). A CoP is a group of individuals who interact and learn together over a sustained period of time. In this way, the group can address problems, share resources, and share stories within a shared practice (Wenger–Traynor & Wenger–Traynor, 2015).

For administrators, many of the advantages of a CoP to engage with the problem are structural. A CoP is generally a structure that allows individuals to self–select into based on interest and passion (Professional Learning Community", n.d.; Seaman, 2008; Wenger, 2016). CoPs are also characterized by a commitment to holding the group accountable as it engages with the shared domain (Wenger, 2016; Wenger–Traynor & Wenger–Traynor, 2015). CoPs can be beneficial for school administrators in their ability to connect in shared practice, providing an antidote of sustained collaboration for the isolation that administrators often experience (Wenger–Traynor & Wenger–Traynor, 2015).

Within CoPs, it is understood that individuals may not always work directly with one another on a daily basis, but are rather bound by a common mission, knowledge base, and understanding of the task at hand ("Professional Learning Community", n.d.; Wenger, 2016; Wenger–Traynor &Wenger–Traynor, 2015).

My initial task as a transformative leader would be to both define the problem and establish its urgency for the CoP. Subsequently, the priority work for this diverse group of

administrators would be to consider the gap between state–imposed assessment measures and the needs of students served by IEPs. Principals and assistant principals could provide input regarding the current student assessment tools and their effectiveness in responding to student need. District–level administrators could frame the gap within the externally–imposed standards for compliance. Together, the team could collaborate to identify possible intersection points that could be built upon, and gaps that demanded a consideration of new assessment strategies that could serve students more accurately and equitably.

Another important activity of an administrator CoP would be an opportunity to reflect upon their own complicity in mandating assessments that perpetuate inequity. This is an important component of this process, and one rooted in both the transformative model and critical theory. Ultimately, naming the problem and identifying the gap would allow this group to consider equitable solutions to the problem, in line with the transformative tenet of critique and care (Shields & Hesbol, 2020).

Ochoa (2016) found that providing opportunities for district–level administrators staff to both engage in inter–departmental collaborative activities and connect their work with student learning and outcomes allowed for a higher level of complex problems to be solved across departments and hierarchies. Because all program administrators work with unique programs that have specific and differentiated needs, an opportunity to both connect with one another and with students across programs in a CoP–type structure would allow administrators to identify both unique needs and common threads as they worked to ascertain strategies to assess students in ways aligned to their needs.

As a structure that is generally considered to be one that invites participants to self–select into (Professional Learning Community", n.d.), the objective would be to have as many site

administrators participate as possible, to encourage a cross–pollination of ideas and a range of rich perspectives. Regardless, because there are structured opportunities for administrators to meet weekly, scheduling additional time to confer within a targeted CoP would not be difficult. One practical shift would be the need to create a flattened hierarchical model with all participants considered peers with equal voice. This would allow site administrators to interact in a safe setting conducive to exploring solutions without top–down mandates.

Proposal #3: Dialogic Group for Families, Students, and Community Partners

A consideration of the community within which we live must include all members of that community. If we are transformative leaders committed to social justice, we must create opportunities for marginalized voices to be heard as we together dismantle inequitable systems, and work toward inclusive and democratic education systems (Furman, 2004; Shields, 2018). The imperative to see students as they really are, and meet their needs in an equitable way, is a social justice issue that is at the core of my mission as a transformative leader (Shields, 2008; Shields & Mohan, 2008). Freire et al. (2018) state that those who have the lived experience are the individuals most able to give voice to their own needs. Freire characterized these groups as dialogic in nature, in that individuals experiencing oppression and marginalization can create meaning through dialoging on their own lived experience and needs as they work toward self–determination and emancipation (Freire et al., 2918).

Ultimately, community is a process based on interactions, collaboration, and relationship (Frick & Frick, 2010). When viewed through this lens, a dialogic group that includes community stakeholders can support the process of centering the needs of students, in service of moving toward equitable assessment measures for students with complex needs. In keeping with the ESD's mission of inclusion and the problem's identified need to reduce marginalized voices, one

priority would be the need to ensure that unheard communities and voices were provided with input opportunities. A community group comprised of parents, community members, students and partner agencies is best able to authentically discuss the needs of the unique students in their lives, both in school and in the larger community. In addition, the elected board members would be invited to attend, as they are the individuals who are most able to facilitate recommended changes based on their votes and recommendations. The uniquely beneficial feature of this proposed solution is the potential synergy between the identified community stakeholders, with their important and powerful lenses and lived experiences, and the leverage that they may have in effecting change.

This group of stakeholders would need to compile the input that they generate, creating a connection between that input and the problem of inequitable assessment tools. Of course, it is imperative that the dialogic group is structured in a way that is democratic and inclusive, allowing all voices equal weight.

Required Resources

To create an agile group, there would need to be strategic invitations that created a low barrier to entry for all participants. Essential participants would include a representative sample of families with valuable and essential input and lived experience. The synergistic relationship would be completed with the participation of the board members, who uniquely positioned to effect change in the interest or responding to the needs of the community (“Demystifying”, 2019). To ensure that participants had equitable access, resources that allowed for provision of technological supports, or respite care for parents, would have to be anticipated, and funded.

In order to ensure that resources were available to the dialogic group as needed, a helpful strategy would be both to identify possible cross–boundary knowledge holders, as well as

provide point people who could connect dialogic group participants on an as–needed basis. For this group, there would be a need to provide resources within the agency, particularly staff members who work directly with students, site administrators who support the respective programs, and administrators who ensure that external compliance mandates are met.

Recommended Solution

Each of the solutions discussed above—dialogic community and family groups, an administrator community of practice, classroom knowledge communities—has unique benefits, and can bring needed information to the PoP. Just as individual solutions have been considered through a transformative leadership and critical theory lens, so too must the recommended solution be considered with regard to its alignment with the emancipatory, democratic, and equity focus that drives me as a transformative leader.

Ultimately, the stakeholders within each group have invaluable input to provide as the issue of responsive curricula and assessments is considered. However, each of the groups has a different perspective. To align with a transformative and critical framework, there is a need to consider power dynamics and create democratized spaces that encourage authentic dialogue. These spaces and that attention to flattening hierarchies and mitigating power dynamics can ensure that there is adequate space to give voice to those unique perspectives (Furman, 2004; Shields, 2018).

There is great value in all three proposed solutions, and the challenge comes in determining how to tap into each one's strengths. Ultimately, all three proposed solutions contain important components that can lead to sustained and collaboratively implemented change. So, the question must become: what solution is the best place to begin? It is in this consideration where the recommendation must be situated, rather than an outright rejection of any of the

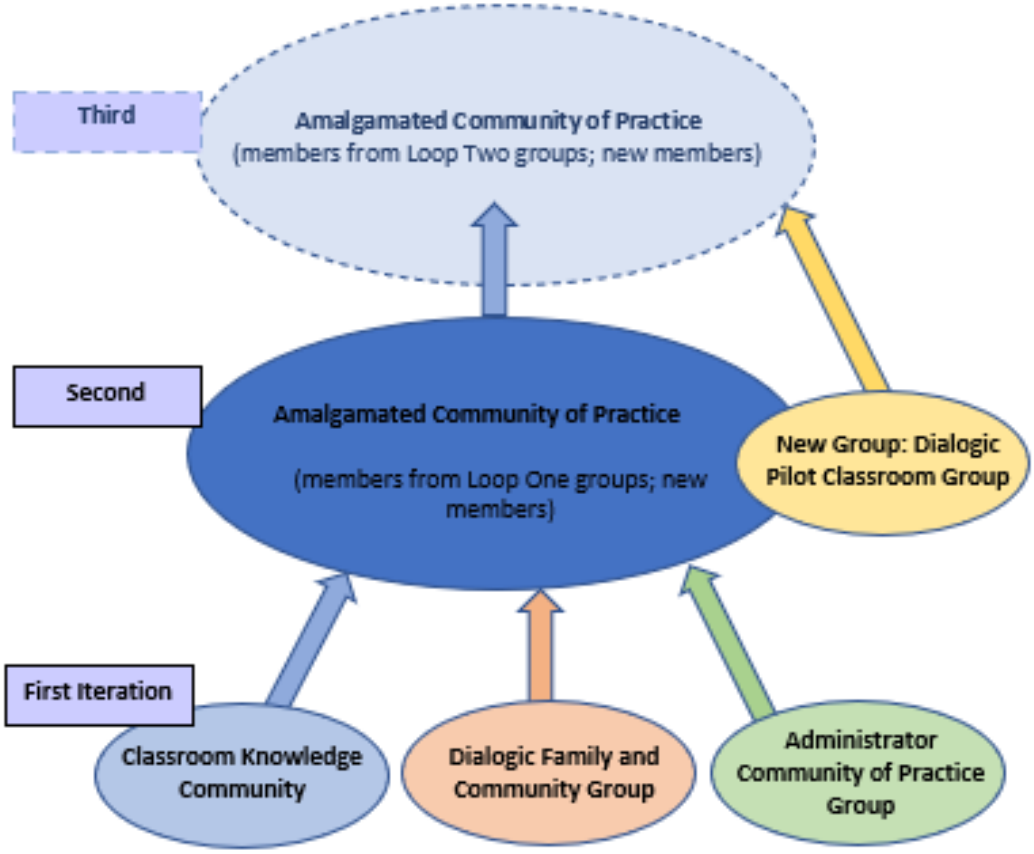
proposed solutions. All three solutions should be implemented, with a plan to amalgamate their efforts as the change implementation progresses over time and through the iterative stages of the change path itself. Initially, groups will work in parallel, with amalgamation and adjustment occurring in ensuing loops.

In beginning closest to the students, the knowledge community groups and community/family dialogic groups have a clear understanding of their student's needs. As illustrated in Figure 10, three unique groups will be implemented at the outset of the change process, with one including educators, one composed of community and families, and one including school administrators. This structure will ensure that there is a high degree of inclusion of diverse voices and perspectives. A diversity of voice is essential to this process, embedded as it is within a critical and social justice lens and transformative leadership framework. Groups formed at the outset of the change process will work both separately and in collaboration, assessing students in ways that celebrates their strengths, and measures their growth and needs. Ultimately, it is through these actions that the work will move toward disrupting the inequity and marginalization that forms the heart of the problem. In this way, the initial groups can gain insight and feedback from one another, establishing recommendations that are rich and multi–faceted in their perspectives. In turn, these insights and recommendations are then carried through to a second iteration, with the opportunity for an amalgamation of the three groups. This consolidation allows for a streamlining of process, and an opportunity to ensure that recommendations are representative of all stakeholders involved in the initial change process. The second iteration carries the work forward, allowing for both the vision and the concrete pilot work to be refined as the amalgamated group works together with a new group, the dialogic pilot classroom group.

Reflecting the iterative nature of this model, the recommendations and revised vision from both the amalgamated group and the dialogic pilot classroom group of the second iteration would carry forward to the third iteration, informing practice, communicating recommendations, and so forth. Ultimately, as Bryk et al (2015) state, change and improvement are continuous processes, and looped iterations of that change should be ongoing.

Figure 10

Three Loop Sequencing of Input Groups



These first iteration recommendations, provided to the amalgamated CoP group and the dialogic pilot classroom groups of the second iteration, could be incorporated as principals, assistant principals, and district–level administrators engaged with the issue of assessments that

perpetuate the marginalization of students. Administrators could utilize their unique perspective and understanding of the external compliance demands to align their recommendations with the recommendations of the stage one groups. The stage three amalgamated CoP would build upon the recommendations of the stage one and two groups, and so forth.

Conclusion

As a transformative leader, ensuring that there is a diversity of input included in the work to build equitable systems for students is a core requirement. Each of the three groups discussed above has value and provides a unique perspective in its understanding of student needs. Ultimately, to ensure that all voices can engage with the process in a meaningful way, the change implementation plan will need to provide the iterative structure that allows groups to engage with the problem and its solutions across time and space.

Leadership Ethics and Organizational Change

The ethical considerations of this work, with its focus on moving student assessment practice within the special education department to a place aligned with the ESD's articulated values, is the space where all the strategies and frameworks that drive this problem converge. Critical theory demands that questions of power, the validity of hegemonic values, and the considerations of systems of inequity be addressed (Freire et al., 2018; Shields, 2018; Rexhepi & Torres, 2011). Similarly, utilizing the inclusive, collaborative, and democratic practices embedded within the transformative leadership approach (Shields, 2008) aligns with the values articulated by the ESD in its mission, vision, and values statement ([ESD], 2020). Finally, bringing practice in line with ESD values is rooted in values associated with an authentic leadership stance, characterized by moral, transparent leadership that works in reciprocal and

collaborative influence between the participants in the collaborative change activity (Duignan, 2014; Northouse, 2019; Taylor, 1991).

A consideration of the organizational change that will most benefit students must by necessity center student need over efficiency (Begley & Stefkovich, 2004). This is an ethical approach because as educators, we are tasked with ensuring that are decisions center the needs of students to the greatest extent possible. Student-centered decisions must guide us as we engage with this work. The disconnect between student need and the practices of assessment that are in place is a powerful and concrete example of the stark opposition at the core of this problem. The equitable outcomes that students deserve, and a community should demand (Shields, 2018), stand in conflict with the mismatched accountability and efficiency of neoliberal practice and values (Hursh, 2006). The ESD, specifically those stakeholders engaged with the work around equitable assessments, must reconcile the state's external demands of compliance, efficiency, and equity with its own internal expectation of equitable support for students. Of course, within the ESD there is also an expectation of efficiency and compliance, contributing further to the paradoxes and tensions. These external and internal tensions become concrete as stakeholders work to find assessment tools that accurately measure genuine student growth and need whilst balancing the competing demands both within and without the agency. The process and outcome of that work provide an opportunity to connect in actionable ways to the ESD's articulated values of collaboration, equity, and inclusion. Of course, the stakeholders doing the work must acknowledge their own biases regarding equitably supporting students within a culture that is both audit–oriented and geared to meet the needs of the dominant class (Apple, 2017; Shields, 2018; Shields & Mohan, 2008).

An important step is to acknowledge the tensions between directive compliance, efficiency, and equity for all students and hold them at the forefront. In so doing, stakeholders can honestly engage with the issue of assessments that perpetuate marginalization and inequity whilst engaging in the transformative and collaborative work necessary to move toward assessment systems that are genuinely equitable and concrete representations of an agency mission based on equity. Bringing the practice of the agency into alignment with its values of equity and collaboration is the ethical choice, and the choice that will promote improved student outcomes.

As a transformative leader, my primary task is to lead and seed change that will center students with complex needs in ways that are equitable and responsive to their needs (Shields, 2018). In this role, I must balance the needs of students with the perceptions of staff, which Hynds (2010) reminds us will occupy a range of spaces, from change resistance to change readiness. Just as change agents will be identified in the implementation plan and utilized to propel change forward, so too will change resisters be forces to consider. Resisters to change in practice will be present across roles in the agency, from classroom staff providing direct instruction to students to district–level administrators who make policy decisions. A resister in a classroom role may passively decline to engage with new strategies for responsive student assessment, whereas a district–level administrator may not believe that there is a problem with current assessment measures. My strategy to address these different challenges would need to meet the needs of each context and situation while aligning with my values as a transformative leader. To meet these challenges, I would need to use strategies of inclusion and transparent communication while continuing to center the urgency of creating inclusive and equitable

structures to support students. A transparent and urgent focus on equitable outcomes for students is an ethical response that is aligned with my values as a transformative leader.

As discussed in the communication section of Chapter Three, an important strategy to address staff resistance is to ensure that communication is multi–modal and transparent, providing diverse opportunities for staff to engage with the problem. As a transformative leader, it is essential that I communicate the urgency of the problem clearly and broadly while understanding that individual staff will have different capacity and information needs (Kotter, 1995; Shields, 2018). It is also essential that I provide inclusive opportunities for all staff to voice their concerns, while continually centering student need, and the ESD's mission values of equity and inclusion.

Brown and Trevino (2006), writing at a time of critical moral crisis not dissimilar from the current time, highlight the need for ethical leadership to use collaborative practice as a foundational strategy. In considering the context and intersections that ethical leadership occupies, the authors connect authentic leadership to ethical leadership in the domain of social awareness. The connection between ethical leadership, collaborative interactions, and demonstrated ethical actions provides guidelines and structural suggestions to guide the work of aligning ESD values with practice.

Victor and Cullen (1988) conceive of the possibility of organizational entities themselves possessing an ethical stance. In this model of the organization's ability to exert ethical influence, there is a reciprocal and mutually influencing effect that occurs between the organization and the individuals who operate within it, with individuals demonstrating an ability to adjust to an organization's ethical culture (Victor & Cullen, 1988). The authors foreground the need for

organizational consensus on norms and values, which are embodied in the ESD's mission, vision, and values (Victor & Cullen, 1988).

In acting as the connective tissue to the ESD values, as well as the place of convergence for my values as a leader, the values foregrounded in this area are an affirmation that there is an essential rightness to this work. It is complex, but ultimately, the ethical stance of the organization provides the road map for the work itself.

Chapter Three: Implementation, Evaluation, and Communication of Change

The previous chapters of the OIP have provided a contextual understanding of the PoP within the socio–political reality of neoliberalism. With its central concerns of marginalization and emancipation, the problem is aligned with issues of equity and social justice, embedded within a critical theory framework, and positioned within a transformative leadership lens that reflects my values as a leader. In Chapter Two, an organizational analysis that identifies gaps between the current and desired state points toward possible solutions, and frameworks for understanding and leading the change are considered. Chapter Three focuses on the implementation, monitoring, and communication of a change plan that is best positioned to address the fundamental issues raised by the PoP. In essence, Chapter Three brings the solutions to the problem into the real world.

Change Implementation Plan

When planning change implementation that addresses a problem that is wicked in its scope and complexity (see e.g., Auclair, 2019; Head & Alford, 2015; Weber & Khademian, 2008), a core requirement is a change framework that can be adapted to manage, address, and plan for that complexity. It is important to emphasize that any discussion of the implementation, monitoring, and communication of a change plan must be understood to be an iterative and

multi–looped process that is flexible and open to refinement based on stakeholder input. As discussed in Chapter Two, Cawsey et al.'s change path model (2016) provides a model that allows for an inclusive and incremental approach. In addition, the modular nature of the CPM provides the opportunity for adjusting improvement strategies and priorities based on input across the model's four stages. Kotter's change model (Kotter, 1995; Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008) provides succinct and action–oriented emphasis to the themes within Cawsey et al.'s change path model (CPM), and the relevant priorities from the Kotter model are overlaid onto the CPM where they provide additional clarity. The essential components of the first two loops of the CPM can be found in Figure 11. For a more detailed consideration of the change path loops that includes elements such as detailed timelines, specific stakeholders, and proposed loops and actions beyond the scope of this paper, please see the Appendix.

Awakening: First Loop

As previously discussed, the change implementation plan, due to its complexity, will be iterative and multi–looped. The figure in the Appendix illustrates in detail how key actions such as staff professional development, stakeholder vision refinement, and communication of stakeholder vision and recommendations to the community and organization are implemented within each loop of the CPM. Many actions are initially implemented in the first iteration, and then revisited and refined in the second.

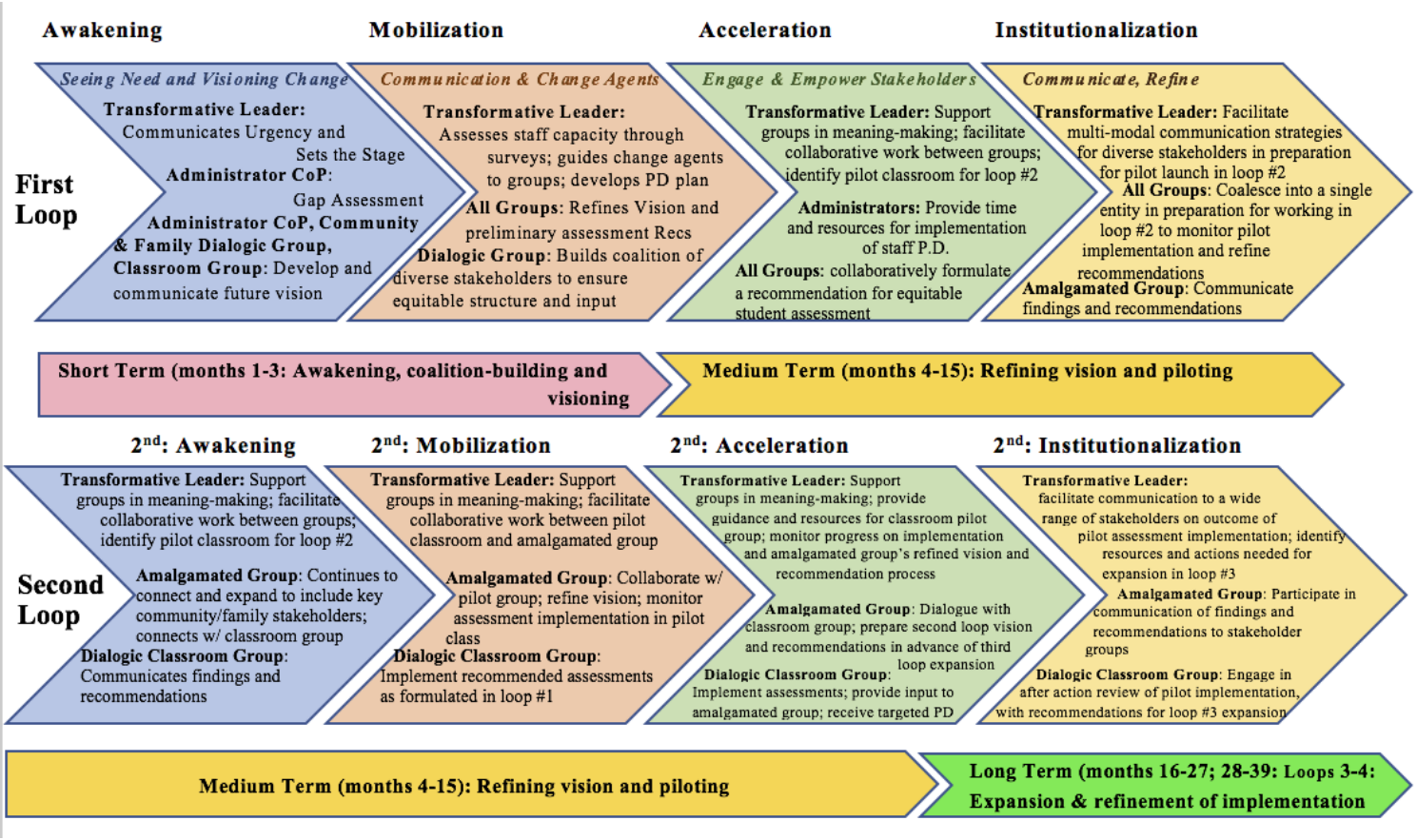
Determine the Need and Capacity for Change

As the organization and the community begin to engage with the problem, as a transformative leader it is essential that I ensure there are opportunities for all voices to be heard (Shields, 2018). I must also, at the outset, frame the conversation as an urgent issue of equity for students (Cawsey et al., 2016; Kotter, 1995). As Cawsey et al. (2016) have stated, there is no

shortage of complex problems that can be seen as urgent, and one essential role that I have at the awakening stage of Loop #1 is to make the case for why assessments that meet student needs in an equitable way is a priority of focus.

Figure 11

Change Loops and Timelines Within the Change Implementaion Plan



Note. Adapted from *Organizational Change – An Action-Oriented Toolkit* (3rd ed.), by T. Cawsey, G. Deszca, and C. Ingols, 2016, Sage. Copyright 2016 by Sage Publishing.

An inclusive approach that includes a variety of stakeholders within the organization and in the larger community is essential for understanding the nature of the current state, as well as the desired future state. Furman (2004) suggests that schools, through engaging in iterative action research with school and community stakeholders, can move dialogue and common understanding to a place of actionable steps that promote equity and inclusion. A transparent approach to this work is critical, as is the opportunity for all stakeholders to have the opportunity to engage critically with the current state, building relationships and dialogues that can allow a vision of a more equitable future state to be formed (Freire et al., 2018; Shields, 2018).

The first iteration's awakening stage will primarily be focused on beginning the formation of naturalistic stakeholder groups that could collaboratively engage with the problem. For Loop #1's first iteration of awakening, three distinct groups will be engaged with this work, with each group having a specific structure and dynamic that is able to uniquely meet its particular needs.

The Family/Community group will resemble what Freire et al. (2018) call a dialogic community group, and will include students, families, and community stakeholders such as partner agencies. The heart of this group is its authentic understanding of the reality of student's lives in the worlds beyond school, including the community, families, and the workplace spheres. Students and families are best able to identify their strengths and needs, and this dialogic group will provide valuable strengths–based insight into how to serve students in a meaningful and authentic way. Although it is understood and often stated that students and families are the center of the work that educators do, the reality is that the pressure of standardized testing, as a hallmark of the neoliberal landscape, is in opposition to what students and families know meets their needs. In this way, a dialogic community group can provide an

antidote to the neoliberal milieu, allowing for marginalized voices to be heard and alternate visions to be formulated (Shields, 2018).

The second group, the classroom knowledge community, will be composed of a heterogeneous mix of staff who work directly with students, including educational assistants, teachers, and related service providers such as occupational therapists (OTs) and Speech language pathologists (SLPs). This group, closest to the work and occupying a variety of roles and perspectives, can engage with the current and desired future state from the perspective of what is currently being implemented in the classroom. The knowledge community has a low barrier to entry and can engage and give anecdotal accounts of their experience in an authentic way. The knowledge community can provide valuable input on the ways that current assessment measures are disconnected from student strengths and needs. As a transformative leader I will work with principals and staff to provide opportunities for individuals to gather in conversation. In addition, I can source information and resources as requested by this and all groups to contribute to a foundational understanding of the nature of the work itself. In addition, clear guidance on the output will be provided at the outset of the awakening stage, so that staff can make informed decisions prior to participating.

The third group will include principals, district–level administrators, and possibly teachers, and will most closely align with the structure of a Community of Practice (CoP). The CoP model can be seen as a more inclusive alternative to a Professional Learning Community (PLC), as well as less likely to be characterized by top–down mandates. This flatter hierarchy is important, as this group will be composed of educators across roles and with varying degrees of influence and access to decision–making power. In this respect, ensuring that all individuals at the table can bring their unique perspectives is essential. Because this educator group is

composed of a diverse range of individuals, the CoP model is well–suited in its ability to provide greater flexibility in support of collaborative practice both within and across communities (Wenger, 2016; Wenger–Traynor &Wenger–Traynor, 2015). As this group will engage with current student assessment data to consider the gap between current proactive and future state, a group structure that allows for equity in voice and influence is something that the CoP is more likely than the structure of a PLC to provide.

As a transformative leader, I must navigate the tension between framing the problem for stakeholder groups and providing the space for these groups to freely engage in dialogic work to determine the nature of the problem and solutions from their own lived experience of it (Freire et al., 2018). All groups will have unique perspectives and tensions that they themselves must navigate, and that I cannot mediate. Ultimately, a transformative leader's role is to frame the urgency of the problem, anticipate group need, provide space for voices to be heard, gather resources and answer questions as they arise (Kotter, 1995; Shields, 2018).

Using Nadler and Tushman's congruence model as a template, I would frame the problem within the context of the inputs that influence its current state, and possible future states that are characterized by more responsive and equitable assessments. Using inclusive language that encourages critical dialogue, I would encourage groups to consider the current state through a critical lens of equity, as this acknowledgement and investigation of the current inequitable state allows for genuine solutions to be envisioned (Shields, 2018). As befits a diverse group of stakeholders with different lived experiences and perspectives, each group would have a different focus as they engaged with the problem and represent what Cawsey et al. (2016) calls a change team (p. 271). As discussed, community members, in particular families and students directly impacted by inequitable assessment measures that are not responsive to their needs, will

dialogue on their lived experience as families, students, and community members regarding the problem, beginning with a strengths–based framing of their student's lives.

My role as a transformative leader will include connecting with this and other groups to ensure that groups are able to contextualize the inputs that influence the current state, and then create a vision for an equitable future state. Classroom knowledge communities will engage with the problem through their close work with students, considering how student strengths interact with current assessment expectations. Their experience will provide valuable insight into concrete strategies for equitable assessments, and their buy–in will be essential as change is implemented (Cawsey et al., 2016). Administrators and principals will engage with the problem through considering assessment data as it currently exists, in the context of other data that capture student need, such as IEP goal data. Not all administrators are involved with setting expectations regarding assessment criteria, so working to ensure that district administrators can connect with the work of students in their classroom contexts will provide valuable insight with regard to recommending equitable and responsive assessments for students (Ochoa,2016).

In the awakening stage of loop #1, for groups to engage with the problem in a robust and solutions–focused way, it is essential that I use my position of leadership to communicate the urgency of what might be considered a rather mundane issue (Kotter, 1995). My message of urgency will be tailored to each group in a way that invites both open dialogue on the current state, as well as an understanding of the process and actions needed to move toward more equitable and responsive student assessments. As I engage with these groups in both framing the problem throughout this phase of the awakening stage, I will also be assessing stakeholder capacity, strengths, and needs. This stakeholder analysis will allow me to assess how change would impact different individuals and groups, using that information to plan future strategies for

change implementation (Cawsey et al., 2016). Assessing stakeholder capacity and perspective also allows for the identification of change agents and coalition–builders who will move change forward in the mobilization phase of the CPM, and beyond (Cawsey et al., 2016).

Formulating and Communicating the Vision for Change

In the first loop of the change implementation plan, each group will be challenged to consider a future state that would provide equitable and responsive assessments for students. In framing the problem of the current state with each group, I will highlight the need to create a vision of equity that can be made manifest in responsive assessments. I will also set a goal for each group to find a way of creating a vision though dialogue and investigation. I will encourage groups to consider the promise of equity, community inclusion, and family support as manifest in the ESD's mission, vision and values and connect their vision to the values articulate in that documents statement ([ESD], 2020). This collaboratively created vision will be communicated to the stakeholders directly impacted by it, namely the community of parents, guardians and students within the program affected by the change. In addition, any program staff who have not been part of the classroom knowledge communities or Community of Practice will also be asked to participate in an informal meeting that will communicate the vision, and the timeline of its implementation across the loops. Crafting a clear change communication strategy whilst providing opportunities for clarification serves several important purposes. It allows essential stakeholders an opportunity to understand the "why" behind the change plan. In addition, communicating the tangible benefits of the vision and its implementation allows stakeholders who do not participate in the visioning process to build buy–in, as well as collaboratively build capacity through an articulation of shared values in service of students (Northouse, 2019).

First Loop Mobilization: Build Coalitions and Structures to Support Change

As the change plan begins to take shape beyond a vision, as a leader it is essential to build coalitions for change that utilize change agents and those staff who have the capacity and belief in the vision and the change (Cawsey et al., 2016). These high–capacity staff and stakeholders have been identified during the initial group formations that occurred during the awakening stage, as groups engaged in critical conversations on the gap between the future and the desired state. These individuals must be invited into the ongoing groups of community partners, informal classroom groups, and administrator's community of practice groups, as change agents build capacity and seed change (Cawsey et al., 2016). This bottom–up change is much more sustainable than top–down mandates from administrators and can take on a life of its own in terms of long–term capacity–building (Cawsey et al., 2016). Genuine emancipatory change must be guided and articulated by those most affected by it, otherwise it cannot be responsive to the need that it seeks to address (Freire et al., 2018; Shields, 2018).

Supporting Staff Interacting With Change

As discussed above, each of the three diverse groups of stakeholders will continue to engage with the problem in ways that are unique to their needs. In loop #1, differentiated groups will allow for coalitions of individuals with like experience and knowledge to bring their perspectives to the problem, their vision, and their recommendations for change. Providing authentic groupings will provide opportunities for honest dialogue that is less likely to be influenced by power dynamics, or the idea that experts decide the tenor of the conversation. Freire et al. (2018) suggest that those most impacted must be the authors of their own solutions through democratic and non–hierarchical dialogic groups, and it is in this spirit that differentiated groups are the foundation of loop #1, with one amalgamated group forming out of these three groups as the work transitions in to loop #2.

My task of gaining an understanding of the needs and perceptions of staff beyond these groups is essential. This information can lay a responsive foundation for the second loop of the change path, when the work of the first loop, namely recommended assessments for students, is implemented in a pilot classroom. As Cawsey et al. (2016) state, organizational change requires that people shift their belief structures, and as a leader it is important to understand clearly what those beliefs are across the program. This information, gained through a program–wide Likert–scale survey, allows for the development of professional development trainings for staff that are targeted to identified needs of staff, as well as the articulated change formulated by the three groups formed at the outset. Responsive and differentiated professional development, planned at this stage and implemented during the acceleration stage, supports capacity–building, as well as buy–in and the opportunity to shift perspectives in anticipation of change (Cawsey et al., 2016).

First Loop Acceleration: Engage, Support, and Empower Stakeholders

As the three articulated stakeholder groups continue to consider potential recommendations for equitable student assessments based on their knowledge–building, dialoguing, and assessment of current data such as student IEP goals, progress monitoring, and standardized test results, the acceleration stage of the first loop will implement professional development trainings for program staff. These trainings will be designed to both meet staff needs identified in the survey, as well as provide targeted capacity–building toward the articulated vision. In addition, these first loop trainings will provide the foundation on which future implementation can rest, serving as an opportunity to both frame the problem and provide staff with concrete intervention strategies. Through targeted professional development, staff needs will be acknowledged while they are invited to co–learn a new language of equity in support of students.

Manage Transition, Assess Progress, Celebrate Success

Moving through the acceleration phase, the work and research of the classroom, CoP, and dialogic community group converge. The groups gather to discuss their findings regarding equitable assessment strategies and collaborate as a larger entity put forth their recommendation. This brings multiple perspectives to a complex problem and reinforces the notion of the importance of democratic participation in emancipatory action (Furman, 2004; Shields, 2018).

Based on the recommendations of the three groups and taking into account the staff assessment and staff surveys on perceptions and capacity, the pilot classroom is identified, and the work begins to communicate the next loop of the change plan.

First Loop Institutionalization: Communicate the Need for Change

As a transformative leader committed to building consensus and vision through transparent and critical engagement, creating opportunities for communication and input is essential (Shields, 2018). At this point of the first loop, all staff within the program and all community members served by it must understand the essential vision of the change, and the way that this vision will become manifest in the pilot classroom of the second loop. Because there are a wide range of stakeholders with varying needs, communication of the recommendations and an outline of what that will look like in the pilot classroom will be multi–modal, including Zoom and face–to–face staff meetings as well as presentations on both the first loop process and the upcoming pilot implementation of the second loop. There will be targeted social media postings disseminating key information, and a newsletter mailed to families and stakeholders. Questions or concerns that are brought forward will be logged, to be considered as the change plan moves through the second loop.

Second Loop Awakening: Determine the Need and Capacity for Change

As the change implementation plan transitions to the second loop, the community, CoP, and classroom groups tasked with visioning and recommending assessments in the first change loop must shift in structure, purpose, and stakeholders. One amalgamated group will be formed at the end of the first loop for work in the second loop. A dialogic group structure with diverse voices, the amalgamated group will ensure that the vision will move forward from the first loop while remaining alive and relevant with input from those closest to the work (Freire et al., 2018; Furman, 2008; Shields, 2018). Expanded and refined, the newly consolidated group will move the first loop vision into a new space of action as it engages with the work of the pilot classroom. Group members will be able to refine the first loop vision with input from students and staff as the recommended assessments are being implemented on the ground.

Second Loop Mobilization: Build Coalitions and Structures to Support Change

The value of peer collaboration in support of both capacity–building and systems–wide change cannot be overstated. This kind of collaborative practice is high leverage in its focused attention on creating a common understanding in support of a targeted goal. In addition, this kind of group collaborative effort is significant in the way that it creates its own output–a peer group that has a higher level of capacity regarding the problem with which it is engaged.

Second Loop Acceleration: Manage Transition, Assess Progress, Celebrate Success

At this point in the second loop change implementation plan, it is to be expected that there will be excitement in the change across the program, trepidation at the thought of new and unfamiliar practice, and wariness at the work involved in bringing change to fruition (Cawsey et al., 2016; Hynds, 2010; Northouse, 2019). These dynamics can be in place at the same time, or at multiple times with one or more individuals or groups, as change is by no means linear. At its core, change is an iterative process (Bunea et al., 2016; Johansson & Heide, 2008).

Another central task of the amalgamated group at the acceleration stage of the second loop is to revise their recommendations of the assessment tools used in support of equity for students. At the end of the first loop, the three groups—family/community dialogic, classroom knowledge communities, and community of practice—converged to craft a recommendation based on their own vision and understanding of the problem. In the second loop, as discussed previously, the group crafting recommendations is different. It is closer to the work of staff and students and has had an opportunity to engage with those who are disenfranchised, hear their voice, see their experience, and gain an authentic understanding of their lived reality (Freire et al., 2018; Shields, 2018). In this way, the recommendations of the second loop group can build on the foundation of the first loop's groups, bringing to the work a unified internal dynamic, range of experience, and diversity of voice and roles that differs from the first loop's groups.

Institutionalization: Second Loop

The primary task of the second loop in the institutionalization phase is to communicate the change to the larger organization in preparation for the expansion of responsive student assessments across the program's classrooms. Although the program's staff have participated in the iterative communication process from the beginning of the first loop of change implementation, it is important that the communication process is transparent and iterative, just as the change plan is those things.

As the communication strategy is undertaken, as a transformative leader, it is important that the communication process is as inclusive and responsive as the change implementation plan has been overall. Ensuring that the voices that have been part of the process throughout are included is paramount. This reflects its democratic and dialogic nature and ensures that the spirit of the problem itself, that of honouring and including marginalized voices and experiences in a process

of emancipation and inclusion, is reflected in the solution (Shields, 2016).The nuance of communicating change will be discussed in greater detail in an upcoming section in Chapter Three.

Measuring Success and Monitoring Progress

In its most essential form, this OIP is concerned with the implementation of student assessment measures that seek to support student's needs, and accurately measure student's true growth. To determine the effectiveness and revisions needed within the change implementation plan, progress in that central goal must be monitored and evaluated in a meaningful way. In addition, it is essential that the central issue of supporting more equitable outcomes must be considered at the highest systems level beyond the change implementation plan.

In any change implementation plan, the data chosen to be monitored must also be evaluated to determine the path forward, and that is particularly true for an iterative approach. Each iteration of change must be evaluated based on the data gathered through the monitoring processes, with progress evaluated and adjustments made accordingly as the plan moves through the iterative cycles (Cawsey et al., 2016). Of course, as previously mentioned, "what is measured is what gets done" (Cawsey et al., 2016, p. 72). This is true for what is considered important to monitor and evaluate through the iterations of the change process, and it is important as a transformative leader to use a transparent and collaborative approach in determining what is monitored, how it is monitored, and the evaluative decisions made as a result. In addition, to ensure that the PoP itself is addressing what it purports to address in terms of equitable outcomes for student, data should be considered at the highest systems level. To assess that essential question, baseline data collected on post-graduation student outcomes prior to change implementation could be used as a gauge to assess the overall efficacy of the change plan itself,

with post-graduation outcomes collected on a yearly basis to assess efficacy of the change implementation plan.

A central paradox to consider is the fact that data must be collected to determine how to serve students, when they have been failed by the data that has historically been used as an instrument of their marginalization. In addition, the central importance of stakeholder perceptions, and the need for targeted and strategic support for staff as they engage with the change, must also be monitored over time.

Beginning with a baseline survey of staff perceptions at the outset of the first loop, tracking staff perceptions across the loops of the OIP can provide valuable information on the effectiveness of communication strategies, assess capacity, and allow for a responsive approach to the provision of professional development.

Ultimately, strategies to implement equitable student assessment measures can only be successful if concerned stakeholders have the buy–in and resources that they need, including time, student progress and assessment data, and relevant information (Fullan, 2011; Newcomb, 2008). Evaluating stakeholder perceptions and capacity and then using an iterative approach to monitoring these can support the overall success of the implementation plan.

The idea of considering the monitoring and evaluation of change around student assessments and the monitoring of stakeholder perceptions as separate entities is seductive, but it is a false dichotomy. As a transformative leader committed to exploring the ways that social justice can be made manifest, these change elements are all part of the whole, and inter–related to each other. In creating what Shields (2018) calls new knowledge frameworks, all stakeholders must be involved in co–creating the indicators for equitable student assessments, as well as

create the criteria that signify success. In this respect, the change plan is best described as a Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation strategy (PME), in that all stakeholders are involved in the process and determine the indicators for intervention and criteria for success (Holte–McKenzie et al., 2006).

The process of stakeholder groups engaging with the central problem can itself provide a template for understanding how stakeholder's changing perception and capacity interact with and influence the core problem of assessments that marginalize students. The documented shift in perceptions amongst stakeholders as they engage with the central problem can thus inform the assessment tools used to assess perception and capacity on a larger scale.

Measures and Tools

Fullan et al. (2015) underscore the key dynamic that animates this OIP when they assert that internal accountability factors are the natural drivers of real and authentic change, as opposed to mandated measures that are imposed externally and from the top down. A focus on internal accountability, in which stakeholders engage in the work of co–creating equitable student assessments through actions such as collaborative work and peer–based feedback, is more likely to result in student growth and staff capacity (Fullan et al., 2015). These strategies of collective and collaborative work across stakeholders are aligned with my transformative leadership stance and are key in animating this change implementation plan. In line with a transformative, social justice–oriented lens, the successes of the change actions are best measured using qualitative tools that reflect the collaborative nature of the change process (Furman, 2004; Shields, 2018). As Freire et al. (2018) state, the most profound change occurs when those closest to the change are the people who determine its nature. As a leader, this paradox is top of mind in the context of this work, and it is this knowledge that leads me to frame

the problem and seek input rather than mandate goals and outcomes at the outset of the awakening stage in loop one. This primacy of the need for input from a wide variety of stakeholders, particularly families, community stakeholders, and students, is reflected in the focus on qualitative data, such as records of group collaborative dialogue and the resulting visions and assessment recommendations, throughout loop one. Of course, quantitative data such as current student assessment data is useful in supporting the work of the collaborative groups and informs the work at appropriate points within the change path cycles (see Figure 12).

And, at the most fundamental level, the kind of data collected must reflect the needs of the students. Where quantitative data has been used to marginalize students up to the current moment, using qualitative data in capturing student need is a valuable strategy. As stakeholders engage with the task of understanding student need, students need to be included in determining their own needs, no matter the nature of their input. Qualitative data such as interviews, student portfolios, and videos of students in the classroom and the community can provide an antidote to the quantitative data used previously.

As the stakeholders in all groups engage with the issue of the ways that current assessments perpetuate marginalization of students, much of the focus of the work lies within the qualitative domain of envisioning a desirable future state whilst assessing stakeholder capacity through surveys, interviews, portfolios, and feedback. The quantitative data on current student assessment measures, when juxtaposed with student data reflected in student products and IEP goal domains, can provide a snapshot of the current state and a possible roadmap toward future assessment strategies, respectively. In addition, quantitative data provide a baseline for assessment that can be used as a measure as the change plan moves through the change path sections. This is particularly important in part A of the second loop. In this loop, there is the

piloting of more equitable and responsive assessment strategies for students, and an opportunity to closely monitor the implementation's challenges and successes.

Loop One

As previously discussed, loop one is primarily concerned with the formation of several groups who will engage with the central problem of the OIP while simultaneously reflecting on their own perceptions of the problem. In the awakening stage of loop one, one primary monitoring goal is to ascertain baseline stakeholder capacity through self–reflection and observation. The other important monitoring task in loop one awakening is to consider the current state of student assessments. This data is both baseline data and how the gap analysis can begin to be implemented. In engaging with this data, the stakeholders can then begin the process of visioning and goal setting, thus laying the groundwork for the completion of the gap analysis.

The mobilization stage of loop one provides baseline data regarding general staff perceptions and capacities in the form of the first iteration of surveys. Surveys can be useful in determining staff attitudes and perceptions both in terms of slices of time and longitudinally (Cohen et al., 2018), and they are invaluable to assess staff in a low–risk way that encourages honest sharing. This initial survey will provide data on staff receptivity to change in practice., In addition, they will record staff perceptions on the authenticity of student assessment measures. This survey data can also be used to design professional development trainings that strategically address identified need. Topics may include the design and use of authentic data collection tools to support students, and the design of responsive instruction to support students with complex needs. Regarding receptivity to change, it is expected that staff attitudes will range from

receptive to negative regarding changes to be implemented, and this information is essential as the team plans for supporting staff as they engage with the change (Cawsey et al., 2018).

The acceleration stage of loop one provides additional feedback opportunities from staff in the form of interviews, anecdotes and survey responses relating directly to the professional development trainings implemented based on feedback from the prior staff survey. The two surveys will bookend an initial professional development training, representing an opportunity to determine the effectiveness of the first loop training. This information can then be used to refine the professional development trainings to be provided in the second loop, when the pilot classroom is engaged with implementation of equitable student assessments.

The institutionalization stage of loop one is primarily concerned with communication, with any monitoring tasks related to a need to ensure that community input is incorporated prior to recommended student assessments in loop two.

Loop Two

First loop work represents the initial foundation building, while loop two is concerned with tasks that monitor the pilot implementation of equitable student assessments. In preparation for the loop two pilot classroom, first loop tasks are largely qualitative, focusing on group formation, stakeholder perception assessments, and initial goal setting. In loop two, the amalgamated stakeholder group, comprised of dedicated members from the three groups of loop one, will revisit the vision and goals set during loop one and refine these, based on student data collected over the first loop.

Second loop activities in the context of the pilot classroom roll–out continue to monitor staff capacity and perceptions using a through–line of surveys across the loop two change path. These surveys, conducted during awakening, acceleration, and institutionalization, assess staff

capacity and perceptions in real time as the pilot implementation is occurring, and allow for adjustments to both professional development and classroom practice based on feedback. By providing a consistent survey at strategic points in the pilot roll–out, it is possible to gather information on staff perceptions and capacity across the change path loops. This information will both inform the practice within the pilot classroom in real time, and map staff attitudes across time (Cohen et al., 2018). A consistent survey administered at several points in a change path cycle are of use during loop two, and for planning beyond the cycle, as the third and expanded iteration of implementation is contemplated (Cawsey et al., 2018).

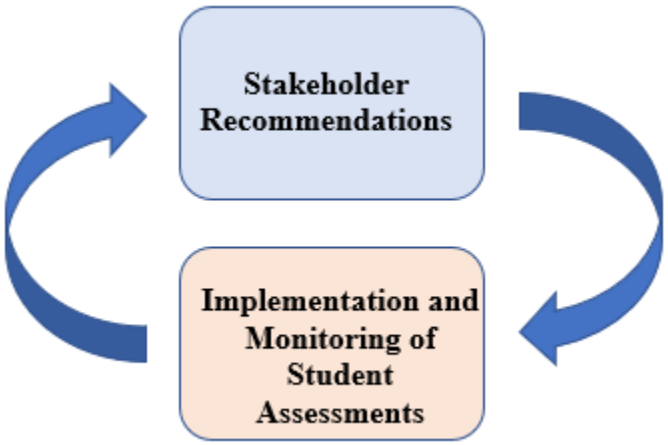
The most important difference between loop one and loop two monitoring is the emphasis on student assessment data in loop two. This focus on student assessment data reflects the fact that loop two monitoring tasks occurs within the context of the pilot implementation of the equitable and responsive assessment measures envisioned and designed throughout loop one. In loop two, student assessment data is collected at each stage of the change path, with the baseline of misaligned student assessment data from the first loop used to understand and close the assessment gap, as well as refine the stakeholder vision and goal setting in the second loop's awakening stage of the change path. As the new student assessment measures are implemented in loop two, each change path stage will provide an opportunity to monitor student data in a way unique to that stage.

During loop two's mobilization stage, recommendations made by the groups in loop one will be implemented in the pilot classroom. Student data will be useful to monitor the fidelity with which these recommendations have been implemented, and determine, through increasing proficiency levels, the responsiveness of the assessment measures. The greater the proficiency on new assessment measures based on group recommendations, the better able the team is to assess

the efficacy of those recommendations as the pilot moves through the stages of loop two. In effect, the recommendations of the stakeholder group(s) inform the implementation, which then informs future recommendations and implementations, as shown in Figure 12.

Figure 12

Relationship Between Monitoring Assessments and Stakeholder Recommendations



This feedback loop occurs across loop two change path stages, with student assessment data being monitored for fidelity to stakeholder–identified recommendations and indicators. In addition, student assessment data measures are measured for fidelity to identified student need, as represented by IEP goals, student interviews, portfolios, behaviour data, and other data generated that support specific student need within the classroom. These data, bolstered by continuously refined stakeholder recommendations, inform the implementation process, with opportunities for adjustment at each stage of the loop two change path.

Communicating the Change

Communication regarding change across all stages of the change path is something that is integral to the change process itself. Whether within groups or across organizations, communication is the primary means of meaning–making that takes place across an organization and beyond (Lewis, 2019). The collaborative change process discussed in the change implementation plan is designed to allow multiple stakeholders from inside and outside the ESD to co–create a common understanding of the changes needed in student assessment. Elving (2005) suggests that change must be defined in order to be effective, and the process of defining and communicating change will occur in many ways across the iterative change process. This iterative change will come to be understood across the ESD and beyond through communication tactics that are differentiated and delivered strategically by those stakeholders who are the best deliverers of the message (Lewis, 2019). Change is something that staff will have varying degrees of comfort with, ranging from enthusiasm to resistance (Cawsey et al., 2016; Hynds, 2010). Building opportunities to anticipate a range of reactions to change through tailored and targeted change communication will play a large part in the successful implementation of change ideas (Cawsey et al., 2016; Elving, 2005; Lewis, 2019; Newcomb, 2008). Ensuring that there are ongoing and transparent opportunities to communicate change ideas in a clear, authentic, and transparent way will build trust and lay the foundation for successful implementation.

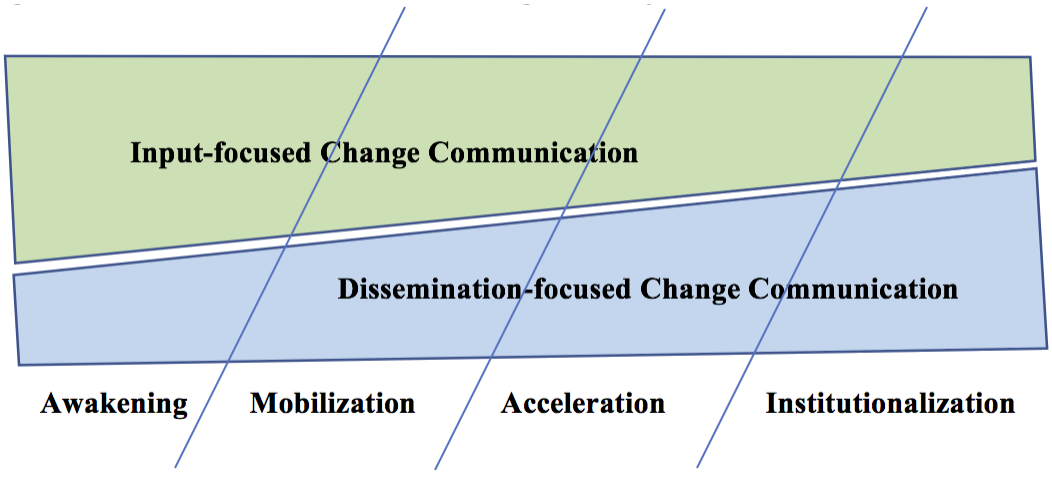
My transformative leadership stance is grounded in a commitment to open, transparent, and inclusive stakeholder participation (Freire et al., 2018; Shields, 2018). The stakeholder groups outlined in the change implementation plan will engage in dialogic communication that models the deep equity that they seek to create. In addition, the groups will reflect a commitment to inclusion of voice and experience that reflects the critical theory framework that informs the work.

This commitment to including diverse voices and experiences is in alignment with the tenets of critical theory, which centers the need to include marginalized voices in first addressing issues of inequality and working toward equitable solutions (Freire et al., 2018; Shields, 2018). Described by Lewis (2019), widespread empowerment is characterized by diverse stakeholder involvement, and is aligned with both the theoretical framework with its focus on equity and inclusion, and my inclusive lens as a transformative leader.

Just as monitoring and evaluation tools are embedded within the change path model, so too are the communication tools to both solicit input and disseminate change, both of which are used in a differentiated way across the stages of change path (Lewis, 2019). As shown in Figure 13, the weight assigned to these communication foci changes across the change path due to the process of change, which shifts from challenging knowledge frameworks and envisioning more equitable outcomes in the awakening stage through to a wide dissemination of change adoption in the institutionalization stage (Cawsey et al., 2016; Lewis, 2019; Shields, 2018).

Figure 13

Shifting Communication Foci Across the Change Path



Note: *Adapted from* Organizational Change: Creating Change Through Strategic Communication

(2nd ed.), by L. Lewis, 2019, Wiley (doi.org/10.1002/9781119431503). Copyright 2019 by Laurie Lewis.

Communication: Awakening to the Need for Change

During the awakening stage of the first change path loop, the primary focus is to build awareness and momentum toward desired change while gathering input from stakeholders with a wide range of perspectives and lived experience. As a transformative leader, my role will be to leverage a message of urgent change (Kotter, 1995; Kotter & Schlesinger, 2008), into inclusive, democratic, and autonomous stakeholder communities committed to co–creating change that is driven by a commitment to equity (Furman, 2004; Shields, 2018). These diverse stakeholder communities will provide the essential input and ideas that will guide the change process as it moves through the change path stages. In this way, communication must move beyond creating momentum and buy-in, and function as a way of creating and influencing the change itself (Balogun & Johnson, 2005). Johansson and Heide (2008) characterize this approach as one that allows change communication to function in a socially transforming way. Using change communication in this way aligns with my approach as a transformative leader grounding my work in transparency and collaboration.

Communication serves to inform staff of tasks that are relevant to their roles, the policies of the organization, and also creates community within an organization (Elving, 2005). Change is an ongoing process that is continuously adapted and modified as it moves through its iterations (Johansson & Heide, 2008). Communication also shifts in how it is delivered and received over time. Lewis (2019) frames input–focused communication as a key communication strategy utilized over the course of change cycles. However, input solicitation exists on a continuum from largely symbolic and meaningless to that which is autonomous and entrusted with resource

allocation and decision–making opportunity (Lewis, 2019). Symbolic input solicitation finds stakeholders providing input that is largely ignored (Lewis, 2019). On the other end of the spectrum, input solicitation can be used to engage with problems, and allocate resources. At the outset of the awakening cycle, my goal as a transformative leader is to disseminate and frame the need for urgent change to potential members of stakeholder groups, recognizing the value of gaining input from both internal and external groups (Lewis, 2019). This process of communicating and framing the need for urgent change would lay the foundation for the work to be done, and signal to the ESD community that change processes were imminent (Kotter, 1995). Providing authentic opportunities for thoughtful discussion will allow potential stakeholders to process information and assess their interest in participating in a stakeholder group. Sessions would be informal, opportunities for dialogue that would provide opportunities for input as well as clarifying the need for change for participants as they considered participation in the deeper stakeholder groups.

Having framed the work and communicated the need for change in informal sessions, the work would begin. Engaged individuals would coalesce into stakeholder groups that analyze and deconstruct the existing knowledge frameworks that perpetuate conditions that marginalize students (Shields, 2018). As these groups engaged in dialogic work that is naturalistic and reflected their experience, they would begin to create visions of equitable and responsive student assessments that would be communicated to those most directly impacted by the proposed change. The key recipients of change communication at this stage would include communities of students and families as well as the classroom staff serving the students concerned. In this iterative model, change communication is both received and generated by participants, allowing

for real transformation to occur as an inherent part of the process (Balogun & Johnson, 2005; Johansson and Heide, 2008).

Communication will take multiple forms for these communities, ensuring that the vision is shared in an equitable and accessible way. Communication would serve to both provide the reasons why change is needed, and answer stakeholder questions and concerns (Elving, 2005). Some strategies to communicate details of the stakeholder visioning process will include social media posts, and letters to families. Discussion at informal (teacher phone calls home, teacher planning meetings) and formal (IEP) meetings will also ensure that all program staff and families were provided communication on the process and given an opportunity for input. Listening sessions for both program staff and families will be held virtually or in–person as is feasible, providing valuable opportunities for two–way communication. These sessions will also allow for processing of ideas and concerns, and input from staff and community members to incorporate into the ongoing visioning and goal setting.

In the second loop change path, there will be a shift toward disseminating the changes in student assessments that have been envisioned and refined over the course of the loop one change path. Loop two finds the change message being presented to both staff in the pilot classroom in a way that sets the foundation for concrete actions and expectations, and this message will need to be presented in several ways. Providing pilot classroom staff with an opportunity to engage in an informal discussion with strategic members of the staff and community stakeholder groups can lay the foundation for the “why” of the change, building buy–in and understanding for the staff most closely affected by the change actions (Cawsey et al., 2016; Elving, 2005; Lewis, 2019).

In addition to understanding the why, pilot classroom staff will need to understand how these assessment changes will be implemented, and what their roles in its implementation will be. Using what Lewis (2019) calls a targeted messaging strategy, change or opinion agents who are trusted members of the staff's community will communicate and build capacity regarding the concrete shifts in practice that will come with implementation. This communication will likely be provided by peers in the context of trainings for staff that are targeted to their roles and needs. These targeted messaging strategies could take the form of scripted but differentiated framing statements that provide the "why" of the changes being implemented as a preamble to the trainings themselves.

Communication: Mobilization

During the mobilization stage of the first loop change path, as the stakeholder groups continue to refine their structure as well as their vision, opportunities to communicate that vision across a wider scope could be beneficial. As outlined in the Appendix, the structure of the stakeholder groups is being refined in the first loop mobilization stage to include change agents. When the stakeholder groups have incorporated these individuals, providing targeted communication on their respective processes and visions to stakeholder groups such as the ESD board, principals, and district administrators can extend the process of change, and signal to additional stakeholders that change actions are being considered and readied for implementation. These communications can be incorporated into board meetings in the form of presentations, with this format being advantageous in that board meetings are typically attended by both staff and community members. The communications of the stakeholder groups' visions are thus diffused across the organization in an organic way, allowing a range of stakeholders the opportunity to hear and process the message multiple times (Lewis, 2019).

Communication: Acceleration

Building on the work within the first loop mobilization stage, the first and second loop acceleration stages are focused on strategic professional development. As outlined in the Appendix, communication shifts from input–focused communication to what Lewis (2019) calls dissemination–focused communication. Despite that shift, input–focused communication strategies can be included in professional development trainings to build acceptance of the proposed changes. Professional development will be differentiated, provided to staff based on their role and need, and led by opinion leaders such as lead teachers and skilled paraprofessionals. Opportunities for questions and concerns can be discussed in a supportive and safe peer environment (Elving, 2005). Resulting feedback can be anonymized by trainers, and provided to stakeholder groups, who can incorporate it into their ongoing work on recommended assessment measures to be implemented in the pilot classroom.

Communication: Institutionalization

Communication in both loops of the institutionalization change path stage are focused on blanket communication. Blanket communication is communication in which multiple stakeholders and entities across an organization and in the community are provided with opportunities to hear a common message on the change actions being implemented or recommended for implementation (Lewis, 2019). Although these messages will be differentiated for specific audiences and their nuanced needs, the focus on the implementation of equitable and responsive student assessment measures that meet student need will be the same. In the first loop, communication on the vision, the process of refinement of the vision, and staff capacity–building trainings will be communicated across the ESD and its component community. Low–stakes town halls will be provided for families and community as well as interested staff. At

these town halls, individuals will be provided information on both the process of assessing the need, and the outcome regarding recommended assessments for students.

According to Buono and Bowditch (1993, as cited in Elving, 2005) uncertainty for staff often centers on the concrete and task-specific implications of change not being communicated adequately. This is an important consideration when designing communication strategies with the pilot classroom staff. Communication that focuses on the pilot classroom staff will be more targeted, with the information being both dissemination– and input–focused. The balance between the two tactics lies in the fact that pilot staff require the technical and practical understanding of the implementation provided by dissemination focused communication, as well as the support in accepting the change (Lewis, 2019). Classroom communication will take multiple forms: responsive professional trainings, informal listening sessions, and my open–door policy focused on answering questions and providing resources.

These first loop communications will represent the culmination of the first loop work, and signal to the participants that the change implementation is about to begin. Second loop communications are partly tasked with preparing for third loop scale–up. However, the primary focus is on providing blanket communication on the pilot classroom implementation to the board, community, component districts, and staff across the ESD.

As Elving (2005) states, it is essential that staff whose work will be affected by change have that change communicated clearly. For those staff who are directly affected, both within the pilot classroom and in the classrooms which will see an expansion of the assessment implementation, blanket communication will be paired with targeted communication. As in loop one, these more targeted communications will take the form of trainings, listening sessions, open

door policy designed to provide answers and resources, and perhaps office hours to reflect larger scale and increased need.

As a recognized leader in the region, the ESD regularly collaborates with districts, providing component school districts with guidance and resources to serve their students, and demonstrating our ability to serve the students whom they entrust us to serve. In this context, communicating the outcome of the pilot implementation can both build confidence and capacity for component districts. This communication will take the form of a presentation by individuals from the stakeholder group on the why of the project, as well as staff from the pilot classroom outlining how the pilot assessment change was implemented on the ground.

Of course, it is essential to communicate with the community, including partner agencies who serve our students, families, and the students themselves, at the conclusion of the second loop, in preparation for the expansion and refinement of the third loop and beyond. This work is centered on the needs of students and families, and aims to meet their needs as whole individuals, honouring their strengths and hearing their voices while working to redress systemic inequities for a more just and equitable future (Shields, 2018). Communication at this time allows for the iterative process to continue. It also strengthens the collaborative structures implemented in the first loop, inviting community and family stakeholders to continue to collaboratively dialogue on how the ESD can equitably and responsively meet student needs.

Next Steps and Future Considerations

In order to move this work from the realm of paper and into the realm of real practice, it is important to consider the concrete steps that can facilitate that monumental shift. Often, as much as one might attempt to remain grounded and connected to the real work, there exists a

divide between writing an OIP and moving it into practice. To overcome and account for that divide, it is helpful to task analyze the steps and resources needed to bring this work to fruition.

Prior to moving this OIP into a concrete plan of action, it would be necessary to communicate its contents in an incremental way to internal stakeholders. Although I am the supervisor who supports the program that would be affected by the first and second change path loops, my autonomy is tempered by an obligation to provide the student services department within which I work a rationale for undertaking change actions that impact departmental practice. In proposing a change to standardized assessment tools used to measure student growth, I would need to communicate to the student services director the "why" of my proposed change. This communication could focus on equity and would also need to highlight the fact that the expected outcome would be more responsive to our student's strengths and needs, as well as more closely aligned with the mission of the agency.

My communication with the department director could provide an opportunity to craft a message that would be delivered to the other directors, particularly the director of curriculum and instruction. This role is one that has particular interest in this change, as requirements for standard assessment measures originate from this department. I have begun this conversation, working to explain the misalignment of student assessment measures, and suggesting possible alternate strategies. Upon completion of this OIP, and in conjunction with the conversation with the student services director, I would be well equipped to revisit this discussion. My OIP provides a blueprint of a process that can be implemented in an incremental way. Sharing the steps of the change path loops would provide a frame to gain acceptance within the department and with the stakeholders whose commitment to support is needed.

When I have gained the support of these key stakeholders, it is important to communicate with other individuals with whom I will need to collaborate and from whom I will request resources. These stakeholders cut across roles within the agency, including the superintendent, teachers, principals, board members, and the communications coordinator. Each of these groups or individuals will have a stake in the outcome of the project, and most can provide support of some kind, be it time, staff member participation, strategic advice, messaging ideas, or a commitment to spreading the message.

As the plan is readied for the first loop implementation, it is important to ensure that the plan does not rest solely within my sphere of influence or understanding. To that end, a written document will be created that includes a clear articulation of the central problem to be addressed, as well as a blueprint of each stage of the first two loops. This blueprint can include a crosswalk that outlines the important stakeholders, key tasks to complete, groups to form, proposed timelines, and proposed criteria for successful implementation.

Conclusion

Each student that the ESD serves is unique, with their own strengths and needs, and it is essential that they are recognized as the important members of our society that they are. Ensuring that they are provided access to curricula and assessment measures that are responsive to their needs is one small way that systems that are inequitable can be made more equitable and inclusive. As a transformative leader who leads a program that supports students with complex needs, it is my moral obligation to leverage my position for equitable outcomes for the students and families that I serve. I welcome the opportunity to co–create the conditions that will allow our students to be served in ways that respond to their needs while celebrating their strengths. Our amazing students deserve no less from us.

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Appendix

Change Implementation Plan

Change Path Stage	Process-aligned Strategy • Priority Action	Essential Stakeholders	Implementation Time Frame
Awakening	**Determine the need for change** ***1st loop***: • Stakeholder assessment • gap assessment • visioning • Vision and gap assessment • Review of student assessment data and IEP goals	+Dialogic family/community groups + Informal classroom groups (teachers, educational assistants, related service providers) + Community of Practice: Administrators, principals, teachers	**Short Term: Months 1-2 of Loop #1**
	2nd Loop • Monitor and adjust • Adjust structural: Connect /expand CoP and community partners with one another and pilot classroom	+dialogic pilot class group +community + pilot	**Medium Term: Month #9 (Loop #2)**
	Develop/Communicate Vision for change *(Kotter: sense of urgency; vision and strategy)* ***1st loop***: • Visions from groups articulated and shared amongst three groups	+see above	**Short Term: Months #1-2 (Loop #1)**
	Communicate the vision and why it is needed ***1st loop***: • program-specific presentations for staff • community and data presentations to district admin	+Transformative leader +Principals and SpEd department admin +teachers +district administrators +superintendent	**Short Term: Months #1-2 (Loop #1)**
	2nd Loop • program–wide presentations for staff	+teachers, EAs, related service staff	**Medium Term: Month #8 (Loop #1); Month #9 (Loop #2)**

Mobilization	**Build coalitions for change** *(Kotter: Guiding coalition; Vision and Strategy)* ***1st loop***: • Incorporate change agents into three groups; continue to assess capacity in anticipation of 2nd loop pilot classroom	+Transformative leader + Dialogic community groups + admin CoP + Classroom group	**Sort Term: Months #1-3 (Loop #1)**
	2nd loop: expanded CoP entity engages with pilot class as they implement recommended assessments	+ **Amalgamated group** including Loop #1 group members from CoP; Dialogic family/community groups; classroom	**Medium Term: Months 9-12 (loop #2)**
	Manage and support change recipients *(Kotter: Empower staff)* ***1st loop***: • Staff survey – needs and perception of change • Targeted PD plan based on survey	+Transformative leader	**Short Term: Months #1-3 (Loop #1)**
Acceleration	**Engage, support, and empower stakeholders** *(Kotter: Empower staff)* ***1st loop***: • Professional Development implemented (targeted data collection) + (prioritized results of survey)	+Principals and SpEd and instructional department admin +teachers	**Medium Term: Months 4-6 (loop #1)**
	2nd loop • Strategic Professional Development– provided to classrooms based on feedback and observed need • Staff survey #2 – needs and perception of change in anticipation of loop #3 Targeted PD plan for expansion based on survey	**Pilot Classroom Staff** +teachers +EAs + Related Service Providers	**Medium Term: Months 13-15 (loop #2)**
	Manage transition, assess progress, and celebrate success *(Kotter: Short-term wins; Consolidate gains)* ***1st loop***: ***Assessment Adoption:*** CoP/ community CoP/Community recommend equitable assessment measures +Recommended Assessments piloted in classroom	+Transformative leader	**Medium Term: Months 4-6 (loop #1)**

	2nd loop: expanded CoP recommends assessment measures for expansion beyond pilot classroom	+Transformative leader	**Medium Term: Months 13-15 (loop #2)**
Institutionalization	**Track progress and course-correct** **Adjust and refine systems and processes based on input** *(Kotter: Consolidate gains)* ***1st loop***: •	+Transformative leader	
	Communicate the need for change across the organization *(Kotter: Communicate Change)* ***1st loop***: Communication: community and strategic ESD stakeholders on adopted change and implications for practice	+Transformative leader +community (families, students, public) +Principals and SpEd department admin +principals, teachers, EAs +Principals and SpEd department admin +teachers	**Medium Term: Months 5-6 (loop #1)**
	2nd loop: • Town-halls, Board meeting presentation • Communication of revised assessment measures resulting from pilot class process in anticipation of expansion • Component district presentation for SpEd directors • Program specific social media communication • ESD website news	+Transformative leader +Component District SpEd directors +community (families, students, public) +comms in collaboration with +Principals and SpEd department admin	**Long Term: Months 16-18 (Loop #2)** **in preparation for expanded assessment roll out in Loop #3 (Months 21-3-) and refinement in Loop #4 (months 33-42)**